POSITION, THE COMMAND OF EXPRESSIVE SPACE

the function of ritual and legitimacy instanced in late twentieth century Australian theatre.

by

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The thesis herewith submitted is the sole and original work of Garry Clive Fry.

Signed: .....

(Garry Fry)

Abstract.

Position often appears in common parlance; for example, marketing talk of 'product positioning' or people 'positioned well' to attempt this or that. Recent work in sociology has attempted to make use of the notion of position within, for example, social representation and social emergence theories.

This thesis posits a series of interlocking mechanisms built on the idea that the motivation to gain and maintain position is the fundamental motivation of human behaviour. The mechanisms presented are drawn from a number of sources, the work on 'distinction' of Pierre Bourdieu and of Victor Turner on 'rituals of affliction' and 'social drama' being of particular importance. These interlocking mechanisms examine the operations of ritual activities in relation to legitimacy claims, the relationship between group membership and the construction of identity and the demarcation of style to effect delimitations of positional claim. Together they explain social tensions requiring constant reflexive and sometimes redressive action to maintain relative social stability. They also explain those periods of major transformation where social 'balance' is irrevocably disrupted and a new stability is sought. The thesis examines such transformations as a shift in a 'space of possible ideas'. The case study of this thesis describes such a transformation.

This case study describes relative stability in the configuration of professional adult theatre companies in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties. It then describes how this period of 'stasis' reflects a significant break in theatre practice that occurred in Australia from the late sixties and proceeded through the seventies. This break amounted to a transformation in the shape of the 'space of possible ideas' arising from a social drama. A discussion of the contribution to this change by the Nimrod Theatre in Sydney and the Australian Performing Group in Melbourne completes the case study.

The study aims to demonstrate the actions of these interlocking mechanisms showing how positions available in the space of possible ideas are subject to claims, representing opportunities for expression by groups and, through them, individuals. Ideological stances sit behind these claims justifying and defending them. In turn, the justifying ideologies are sustained by style in every aspect of theatre activity including programming, production and promotion.

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PART 1.

ARGUMENT, STRUCTURE AND METHOD.

Chapter 1. Purpose and Outline of Study.

> *[Jo] shuffles slowly into Mr. George's gallery, and stands huddled together in a bundle, looking all about the floor. He seems to know that they have an inclination to shrink from him, partly for what he is, and partly for what he has caused. He, too, shrinks from them. He is not of the same order of things, not of the same place in creation. He is of no order and no place - neither of the beasts, nor of humanity.*[1]

In Dickens's *Bleak House,* Jo is "moved on" and "moved on" with never a place allowed for he.

> *"... Never done nothing to get myself into no trouble, 'cept in not moving on ... But I'm a-moving on now. I'm a-moving on to the berryin'-ground - that's the move as I'm up to."* [2]

The positions others occupy do not admit Jo. Jo is excluded and does not believe himself to warrant inclusion. What chain of social circumstances delivers Jo to his "berryin'-ground" while others accede to presidencies, coup leadership, membership of the tennis club, roles as actors or placements as accountants or lurking lawyer Tulkinghorns[3]? How do these circumstantial chains apply to the groups within which we find meaning, purpose and identity? How do the same mechanisms mean exclusion or alienation for others? This thesis argues that the motivation to establish, maintain and to improve position lies at the base of these mechanisms.

This study proposes a series of such mechanisms, most drawn from existing theories including those of Pierre Bourdieu, Victor Turner, Northrop Frye and others. The thesis goes on to describe how they interlock and how this interlocking can be explained by the positional motivation. The thesis further describes how the chains of action to which such interlocking mechanisms of group behaviour give rise, transmit and transform culture. These theories seem to me to explain best both my own professional experience of the interactions amongst theatre companies occupying the same geo-polity and the interactions I observe in general amongst groups occupying roughly the same space. I apply them here to the interwoven groups that form the case studies of this work.

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1 Dickens, C. *Bleak House.* Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., undated edition; first published in book form, 1853, p 676.

2 Ibid, p 669.

3 Dickens' obsessive seeker and abuser of secrets in *Bleak House.*

A case study of theatre in Adelaide in the first half of the 1990s and of two companies, one in Sydney, the Nimrod Theatre Company (Nimrod), and the other in Melbourne, the Australian Performing Group (APG) are used to support and exemplify the interlocking mechanisms I will describe. Together the Nimrod and the APG laid down a legitimating framework for subsequent work in theatre and for major changes in the style, purpose and practice of theatre across the country. For this groundwork, I call them 'lights' and through which their style and ideological outlooks became touchstones for legitimacy in the Australian theatrical scene in the coming decades, against which others increasingly defined themselves.

Though each company came to an end by the eighties, each had significantly influenced the 'space of possible ideas'[4] a term borrowed (and adapted) from Pierre Bourdieu. This effect exemplifies an aspect of the legitimising processes that later companies adopted. the APG had been formative and nurturing of the work of many of the major figures in the Australian industry and its light remained to legitimise many other forms of theatre in the Australian context including community, street and workers' theatre, circus and many other especially liberationist forms of theatre. The Nimrod style came to represent a central thrust of theatrical style in this country for a generation. Both companies legitimised major support for Australian writers and theatre artists and came to represent a watershed in Australian theatre practice.

Beside these studies I use two dramas developed with young people that elucidate the motivating force of position, displaying how it engages and shapes behaviour on the one hand and on the other can become the agent of exclusion and isolation. the two dramas achieve their insights through observation of, and reflection on, schoolyard behaviour. The first observes the dissolution of a group through its own rigidity in dealing with the extra-collectivity aspiration of one of its central members. The second of these dramas displays the fear of alienation as the price of failure in the task of positioning oneself in one's life environment. It is this fear and the oblivion it portends that makes position the fundamental motivation.

This is a sociological perspective on theatrical activity so it contributes to the sociology of art and within that, theatre. Yet, theatrical activity is a field within and beside other and sometimes encompassing fields so we may expect that the mechanisms exposed will relate to other fields. In fact, the

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[4] Bourdieu's term is "space of possibles". See: Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature,* Columbia University Press, 1993, p 30. The space of possible ideas will be discussed as this study proceeds. It refers to extant ideas available for articulation that find sufficient patronage to enable individuals and groups to express through them (the extant ideas) their sense of personal or group identity.

perspective adopted within this thesis, is that the interlocking mechanisms argued here are generally applicable sociologically.

The Layout of the Thesis

The layout of the thesis in five parts tracks a series of interlocking sociological mechanisms capturing the operation of positional drive (diagrammatically presented on page 298). It does this against a dual case study showing the configuration of adult professional theatre in Adelaide in the first half of the 1990s and a major shift in the theatre style that occurred in Australia post 1967. This shift featured in particular the work of the APG in Melbourne and the Nimrod in Sydney. The layout endeavours to display the interlocking nature of these mechanisms in the following way.

The first Part provides the present argument, the sociological standpoints of the thesis and the methodological problems and decisions.

In Part Two, *I and/or We: the Positional Determination of Identity*, I begin the argument proper by considering the question of identity, how it is constructed in individuals and the overriding human anxiety about exclusion.

In the first chapter of the part, the central questions raised are: where does individual agency operate and when does broader membership confer identity. I conclude that neither question can be answered in isolation from the other since agency operates in response to position, which is an entity defined by groups. Therefore, the argument builds upon a notion of the indissolubility of self and collectivity, while allowing that the adoption of persona, acts of identification and the action of self-description give rise to agency and the sensation of a continuing selfhood.

The second chapter focuses on the fear of exclusion and uses the first of two fables of identity, short plays devised with young people to illustrate this. The chapter describes alienation and shows how resilience studies tie the resilience of the individual into the protective actions of the group. It shows how when this cooperative action doesn't work, alienation can result. This conclusion further ties an understanding of identity and group processes to position and operations underlying it. Finally, the chapter uses the work of Northrop Frye on romance showing that this literary form encapsulates the human desire for an integrated identity and life's travail/quest is towards it.

Part Three, *Groups, Claims and Configurations*, takes up the central problem of the first Part as to how groups maintain and attain niches in the

space of possible ideas. In the first chapter of the part, these legitimacy concerns are presented with regard to a configuration of theatre companies operating within Adelaide, a bounded geo-polity, in the first half of the nineties. This configuration exhibits the legitimating strategies each company adopts in the ongoing task of conserving or enhancing their specific positions.

I show how claims to legitimacy for theatre companies are conceived as the purposes of theatre and that the style adopted by each company sustains these claims in a legitimating feedback loop with patronage. The success of the claims indicates a ritual concord between the companies and their varying areas of patronage through acceptance of the style. A series of legitimacy tests operates as the acceptance or rejection of style.

As occupation of space involves the attachment to particular ideas along with the defence and promulgation of these against others, ideology becomes the basis of positional defence and thus in constant tension with legitimacy.

Finally, with the second identity fable I look more closely at the structure of groups. This lays the basis for a schematic presentation of the space of possible ideas, the location of available positional claims by either groups or individuals. The fable also illustrates the breakup of a group under pressure of desertion by a central member. This allows us to see the working out of a social drama, an idea that becomes a major descriptor for the next part.

In the first chapter of Part Four, I provide an introduction to the sharp break with the established theatrical pattern and theatrical aesthetic in the late sixties that lay the groundwork for the configuration of theatre possible in the 1990s. This break shows a transformation beginning, while Chapter Eleven will show the nature of the transformation in terms of how the Nimrod and the APG lay the legitimating groundwork for subsequent theatre in Australia.

In showing the nature of the changed themes and perceptions wrought by these companies, the Part presents these changes by observing the operation of theatre as a reflexive ritual challenging aspects of the normative and contributing to the building of new intersubjectivities. the Part explicates the changed ritual of interaction between producers and patronage. The ritual action of theatre is described in Chapter Ten showing its workings as validation, as balance of tensions and as redress. The part also introduces the idea of the education of perception. When fundamental social change occurs, patterns of interaction and perception change irreversibly, much as they do when a fundamental change in technology occurs.

Changed ritual processes and themes reflected the working through in theatre of a social drama that shaped a transformation in the space of possible ideas. The final chapter of the part shows the change schematically presenting the space of possible ideas in transformation.

In Part Five, *Legitimacy*, the tension between the surface ideological claim and the motivation and necessity to use this as a positional strategy leads to the need to submerge the apparent incongruity of claim and position. This Part begins with this problem and describes groups as the vessels of intersubjective and unacknowledged norms that surface in various and often-unassailable forms such as commonsense.

Once claimed and sustained, positions can be defended too rigidly as the second identity fable demonstrated. This part moves on to show the legitimation crises experienced by both the Nimrod and the APG. Both endings are portrayed as resulting from identity problems, the APG through its inability to redefine itself to adapt to critical circumstances and the Nimrod through making an ill-conceived adaptation.

The final chapter of this Part returns to the configuration in Adelaide. It sketches how the influence of the lights registered in Adelaide and then completes the story by looking at a positional change to all-Australian programming that occurred in the major company, the State Theatre Company of South Australia (STCSA), during the mid-nineties, directly ensuing the period of the configuration studied. This action, the rebranding of the STCSA as the Australian Playhouse concludes the thesis by viewing this unsuccessful attempt at an education of perception by contrast with the successful ones of the lights. This contrast emphasises the nature of transformation in the space of possible ideas.

An Early Interest Leads to a Hypothesis.

Before beginning this thesis, I was observing and studying the link between aesthetic decisions made in theatrical production and the influence upon these of the ordinary decisions of management. However, my interviews suggested to me that this influence tended to be small and that theatre administration was inclined to be supportive of the aims of artistic direction. Thought about programming, for example, only became an issue of conflict if, one, the artistic direction seemed to be out of sync with management's perceptions of the expectations of patronage and, two, significantly reduced box office takings reinforced these perceptions. Up to that point, part of administrative identity seems to be the support of the artistic direction. Naturally, this applies to other areas of aesthetic decision-making that might affect patronage such as casting, standard of

performance and, even, poster design. Furthermore, in observing the task and team focus of production and rehearsal, I was observing not only work tailored as efficiently and skilfully as possible to a goal but also an exhibition of practice that would allow a claim to professionalism.

In a later chapter, I will discuss the gradual waning of amateurism as a central force in theatre production in Adelaide and the subsequent growth of professionalism (see page 101). Primarily, payment for the acting task defines professionalism. This brings with it the notions of talent, skilled craft and flair that in turn imply, *inter alia*, systems of audition and contract, organised training and product-responsive knowledge, skill and attitude applied to production and rehearsal processes. However, professionalism can be precarious in this industry. Unemployment is generally very high. Thus, members of the profession will keenly protect a claim to professionalism and all will want to act in a way that exhibits the rightness of their claim to professional status.

Thus, it is in the nature of professionalism itself and in the claims to it of actors and others with skills in the production of theatre that the influence of surrounding culture may be found. These claims are predicated on the demand for theatrical product issuing from the surrounding culture, the skills required to satisfy this demand and the demand limitations that determine unemployment levels. Patronage economically enables a niche for cultural expression available to which individuals and groups may make claims. In the case I was observing, these claims were professional claims.

'Professionalism' is one of those ideas that seem to sit above critique; it is a self-evident judgement in which the terms are considered, therefore, understood or axiomatic: this is professional, that is not. *In our culture*, 'professionalism' itself is seen, whatever the field, as a necessary attribute of value.

However, nothing sits outside culture adding value quietly and seamlessly or objectively and innocently observing. No art, journalism or academic disquisition is unaffected by the cultural enmeshment and interactivity of lives. Culture is an artefact of society varying from place to place, providing a lavish and intricate display of adaptation to the life environment in every niche of habitation. Professionalism, claims to it and the produced objects of its activity are all part of this display.

Thus, the investigation shifted from a study of the effect of culture on rehearsal practices to how theatre companies and their claims about their practice present a case study of claims on social space in general.

The conviction remained that surrounding cultural influences must be reflected in the rehearsal process. I became especially interested in how

the overall decisions of theatre companies (now with the supposition that, except in the case of box office crisis, management and artistic direction will act in concert) reflect the constraints of culture. This interest took me away from a study of decisions made in the rehearsal room and I became focussed upon another aspect of this nexus: i.e., the way theatre companies take and hold a niche in the patronage for theatre available in a definable geo-polity such as a city.

Thus, a description of the fundamental significance of the legitimation processes adopted by companies within a definable geo-polity and the ways in which these feed into the rehearsal process became a more fruitful study. Or rather, how rehearsal processes and content decisions are integrally bound up with the legitimation processes of the company.

Interviews in which I had been engaged with theatre practitioners, could now simply elicit practitioners' views about the objects of their work and its settings. This was because these views could be recognised and interpreted as legitimation claims and that it was now impossible to understand such claims, in any walk of life, as simply statements of belief or of political analysis or principle or best practice. As such, these statements provide their utterers with tools of interaction with the culture generally and with their fellow practitioners and the patronage in particular. Amongst practitioners, they operate more as code delimiting the range of style that can be adopted in production to suit the niche they occupy or to which they aspire. Claims have to be understood as social necessity, a surface display of the original and largely hidden position-specific motivation to action.

These claims appeared as mechanisms of position annexation and maintenance by individuals and groups. Further, these mechanisms seemed to be associated with other legitimating and ritualised processes and tensions operating within fields of activity and changing at 'punctuated' rates over time.[5] This shift in the investigation marked the adoption of a thesis study and the beginning of a plan for that investigation. The hypothesis that now took form was this:

Claims about objectives and motivating beliefs and the significance of these claims within the fields of action in which they are situated, are part of a mechanism of social belonging and placement, i.e. position, rather than what they are professed to be, namely statements about purpose purported to be rationally congruent with practice.

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[5] By 'punctuated', I simply mean that sometimes change would appear to be slight and the state of things static, while at another time, change would seem explosive.

Such a conclusion has implications for the understanding of theatrical product. Clearly all aesthetic products are culturally indicative, allusive, interpretive and derivative. What may not be fully grasped is the interactivity of product, survival and culture. Product choices and the aesthetic decisions that flow from them arise from the niche decisions of theatre companies. These decisions depend on the establishment of legitimacy. Thus, a significant realm of aesthetic understanding is socio-political. Aesthetic understanding depends on social understanding.

Theatre companies' claims to legitimacy are bound up in, but not congruent with, their identity formations. The latter in turn have implications for rehearsal processes. Accordingly, though the rehearsal room is no longer the focus of my study, decisions within it remain entirely relevant. I would hope that a study of these linkages might cast light on mechanisms of influence between aesthetic activity and cultural context. However, my present concern is to propose and explicate the linkages and trust that they may be applied to any field of cultural production or indeed social activity.

In Victor Turner's terms, theatre is a 'liminoid' activity, i.e. it occurs at the margins of everyday life and bears resemblance to the 'liminal' activity of pre-industrial societies where ritual occurred at the margins occupying an essential role in the maintenance of community stability. Much of its purpose is to do with raking over the coals of human existence and reflecting, even agonising over, experience. Thus theatre is a field of endeavour that makes especially visible certain other aspects of the mechanisms I wish to discuss that are much more hidden in the business environment perhaps or within politics or within the management offices of theatre itself.

In referring to theatre as a liminoid activity, Turner centres for our consideration this marginal or liminal nature and attaches to it a series of operations that he would suggest are important to social health. Such operations that art provides allow our curiosity about ourselves to be indulged, expanded, rechannelled and sometimes satisfied. We travel onward in our understanding of our circumstances and even achieve some plateaux from where to approach the next epoch. In these moments, we collectively reflect upon our debates, interactions and blindnesses.

Reflection of this kind belongs in the liminal activities of our lives; those reflexive points on the margins of regular activity that afford opportunity for reconsideration of normative expectations and behaviour. There is a paradox central to this story in the discourse between legitimacy and

liminality for while this collective reflection is happening, we struggle to maintain our place in the world. In striving, we present our identity, the personal structures whereby we fashion the confidence with which we carry out the tasks of maintenance and attack. Our identities though only function if they are returned to us intact through the filters of other eyes and through the acceptance of our social desire for membership. As individuals, we are caught in the tension of maintaining and asserting both an inner conception of ourselves and the tacit rules and taboos that together mould our personality and yet can feel very different. Likewise, social groupings seek the legitimacy of others and larger encompassing groups (or, as I will describe them, meta-identifications) while wishing to maintain, as Pierre Bourdieu would put it, social distinction.

As part of this identifying or distinguishing process, Bourdieu would view theatre as much more a part of ordinary activity, as having a role in the universal badging of human distinction as he puts it; that is our distinguishing of ourselves as members of one class or portion of a class from another. Here is the paradox. Theatres are just so and their activities necessarily embody legitimising and positioning processes. Yet they also possess this a socially reflexive quality.

I will argue that both are necessarily true and that while we distinguish ourselves by what we see and what we wear and how we speak and by the vehicle we drive, with theatre we also seek an opportunity to review our lives and the patterns of existence we pursue. As we are entertained, we are also chastened or reinforced in our reflections on our actions. As we group ourselves in others' eyes according to the position we are maintaining or wish to attain, we are also reviewing our actions in our life environment. We may still move Jo on to the "berryin-ground" but in reading *Bleak House* we reflect upon the collective actions that have that ultimate alienating result and we debate as to our part in that.

Review, reflection, redress - reflexive activity of all kinds - occurs in all human existence. What Turner observes and describes as rituals of affliction that occur to redress imbalances in the actions of individuals in tribal life and then expands to view as the larger sweeps of 'social dramas', are occurring in multiple micro-spaces in our complex society. These are reflexive moments, when the wheels of action reverse for consideration, redress, change and so on. These 'tribal' moments, to force an analogy, are everywhere. Theatre just makes them more obvious and as theatrical people are more marginal, the existence on the edge of social annihilation is keener. Alienation is more palpable ...

... but from what? From legitimacy itself. Jo "is of no order and no place". He has neither offended nor transgressed and yet he is illegitimate.

"I never done nothink yit ... to get myself into no trouble. I never was in no other trouble at all, sir - sept not knowin' nothink and starwation." [6]

Jo knows nothink and here is a good large part of his problem. Legitimacy depends on possessing some ideological knowledge and capacity that establishes claim and sets up a relationship of owed and owing within a group. Without ideas that are vested by individuals in the task of belonging, there is no legitimacy for them and no position is possible. All groups exist within a space of possible ideas that is delimited by the circumstances of the time but that varies over time. The operations of legitimising position occur within the constraints of this space. So do the redressive and reflective operations of liminal activities. However, the latter do possess transformative potential.

Niche Decisions: What They Are, Where They Come From.

Understanding the niche decisions of Australian theatre in the nineties must derive from the historical context of the watershed decisions of the late sixties and seventies (and encapsulated in the work of the Nimrod and the APG), which occurred in Sydney and Melbourne particularly. Not because they were necessarily better or worse than those which occurred in Adelaide, Brisbane, Newcastle or anywhere else at the time but because they became emblematic of the major modes of theatrical production which would gain legitimacy over the ensuing years.

These decisions can be understood within the context of quests for national identity and to that extent are indicative of much that we now understand as post-colonial, a term often mistakenly thought to embrace only the emergent third world countries. Yet the concentration on language, the appropriation of iconoclastic styles and methods to the purpose of redefinition, the determination to recreate on stage a local context and the surrounding rhetoric of pejorative denunciation of established forms especially where they reflected the outer emblems of colonial culture, accent in particular, are all features of post-colonial responses.

The Australian experience in this regard is an especially Anglo Irish response with specific recognitions of emergent indigenous and migrant experience. It is interesting to compare this with the style of national artistic rediscovery that occurred in the United States in the teens and

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6 Op. cit., Dickens, p 676.

twenties. Where Australia during this period did not experience an enduring modern emergence from the realist and melodramatic forms of the nineteenth century the United States had. As a result, it was a sophisticated self-consciously modern response to the earlier styles.

By contrast, the Australian emergence of the sixties/seventies was much rawer and embraced, though with parodic purpose, those nineteenth century forms such as vaudeville and melodrama that had been successful in forging a theatrical identity. It therefore took time during the years after the great vaudevillian/melodramatic resuscitations, *The Legend of King O'Malley* ('proto'-Nimrod at the National Institute of Dramatic Art) and *Marvellous Melbourne* (APG), to develop the same level of sophisticated response - or rather for the more sophisticated responses to become part of the identity formation and so the legitimating process. The American experience did have post-colonial aspects to it as I shall describe yet more prominent was also a confident flexing of the stylistic and intellectual muscle in the work without the same need and desire for cultural uprising.

Nimrod and the APG soon came to function as models for theatrical styles, programming, governance and technique. While both stood for the new nationalism of Australian theatre, both were also quite different in many respects, the differences tending to model and legitimate varying ideological pathways for other ventures.

The scene in Adelaide during the first half of the nineties represents an evolution from these models. This study describes one 'slice' of the theatrical scene as it appeared and developed in Adelaide during this time. The scene as described had its antecedents in the professional and local theatrical ventures of the late seventies and eighties, especially the Stage Co and Troupe. These companies though having their own energy and originality had likenesses to the Nimrod and the APG respectively and exemplified the modelling that these companies provided. How they fed into the present scene and contributed to the theatrical configuration under consideration is an aspect of this discussion of the evolution of models.

The opportunities available for the legitimation of theatrical activity are many. They certainly exist in performance and in publicity and promotion, in lobbying and in social contact. They also exist, for instance, in the subtle and not so subtle mechanisms of interpersonal behaviour: in reciprocation, in denigration and in partnership.

All these are interactive and contingent on the social platform from which each organisation operates. Cultural affiliation and the manipulation of the emblems of cultural affiliation are therefore determining factors in the operation of all these legitimating processes. Furthermore, cultural affiliation also predetermines both the style of presentation within each of

these processes and others. Cultural affiliation also predetermines what is available economically and socially.

Therefore, while style is predicated upon the purpose that arises from the background social class milieu, it is style, and the symbols of which it is composed, that bear the burden of the legitimating process. This circle of dependence, which relates the materiality of survival to the intangibility of style, is the key whereby these discourses at the margin, the liminal reflexivity in social activity and the notion of legitimacy intersect. For style is the outward carriage of identity and it is at the subjective level of identity that we form our conception of our role as a player in life's drama.

Further, the same circle of dependence relating survival to position to style is fundamental to an understanding of how aesthetic decisions, though filtered by craft, are crucially located socially and culturally; how all decisions, in every field, are equally and crucially located.

Chapter 2. Sociological Standpoints and Main Theoretical Themes.

This chapter begins with an account of the standpoints in sociological theory from which the analysis is developed. These are Field Theory, the observation of tension between social structure and discord in the Manchester School and Situational Analysis. The thesis is specifically characterised as a transformational process theory as opposed to a structural one. Recent theoretical developments bearing on the arguments presented here are appraised with explanation as to their bearing on this work. Since the cases studied occur within the field of theatre, analysis requires the additional scaffold of concepts from theatrical and related discourses. Maria Shevtsova's work on the 'sociology of theatre' provides a pathway to combine the sociological and theatrical perspectives. An introduction to the main theoretical elements of the enquiry follows presented with reference to the major theorists cited.

The work of Dick Hebdige sets out the demarcating action of style in groups while Stuart Hall's work unravels some of the difficulties surrounding the idea of individual identity in relation to group and normative pressure. Pierre Bourdieu's work on distinction furthers these ideas and allows me to introduce the notion of a space of possible ideas based on his space of possibles within which these demarcations operate. Jurgen Habermas's work on the speech act and legitimacy underlines the pressures on legitimacy claims experienced by individuals and groups.

Victor Turner's work on ritual and social drama introduces the significance of ritual within this picture of group occupation of expressive and economic space. The discussion suggests how ritual and social drama operate within demarcations and provide the resolution of problems arising out of the rigidity of claims. Walter Benjamin's ideas on the effect of technology on art show the effect of underlying change on culturally significant objects and observances.

Throughout this thesis, 'ideology' as a term has been brought back into use over the term 'discourse' that, broadly speaking, replaced it. Ideology as a term better connotes justification by claim to 'right' and that is the reason for using it here. I have also used the term 'intersubjective agreement' from Habermas over discourse. For the present argument, intersubjective agreement connotes the action of individual agency simultaneously with the unacknowledged confluence of individualities in turn guided by the ideology justifying group position. Group position, as I will describe in Part Three, underwrites conferred identity and flows into selfhood.

The idea of alienation is recognised as a major result of exclusion or the failure to achieve sufficient position; it is Jo's desperate problem in *Bleak House* and the opening quote of the thesis. Northrop Frye describes the role of alienation in romance underlining its significance as a story to which humans continuously and reflexively return in theatre and other forms of art and popular culture.

Situational Analysis and Rational Action Theory

This thesis summons up the debate between situational analysis on the one hand and rational choice on the other. Criticism of situational analysis is that it is a vague idea, unable to separate factors and therefore delivering little predictability when applied to the real world of social or economic analysis. Conversely, the idea of 'rational choice' purports to provide this predictability. This thesis offers a view of the underlying mechanisms that shape 'situations' built on a positional conception of motivation. The intention is to challenge our perception that motivation is hydra-headed and to propose that whatever the motivational variety we appear to observe, position is the key motivator. However, this does not necessarily make human choice 'rational' or predictable. It does point to mechanisms offering possible routes to greater predictability.

Goldthorpe in his *Rational Action Theory for Sociology* [7] prefers the nomenclature Rational Action Theory to Rational Choice. His task in this article is to examine the species of rational action theory (which, with delight, he refers to as RATs) and to compare the differences amongst them. He sees the varieties as those having relatively "strong [or] weak rationality requirements", "situational [or] procedural rationality" or with claims to a "general [or] special theory of action".[8]

In his examination, the question arises as to the cognitive basis of action. Goldthorpe reports R. Bourdon, a proponent of a RAT cognitivist model, as asking for a "cognitive sociology" or "a new sociology of knowledge".[9] The argument underlying such a study arises from a dichotomy between 'objective' and 'subjective' rationality,[10] 'outside the skin' or 'inside the skin' determining factors. In other words, how might we explain the appearance of 'false beliefs', i.e. beliefs, like cargo cults that do not match objective

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7 Goldthorpe, John H., "Rational Action Theory for Sociology"; *The British Journal of Sociology*, V49 No2, June 1998, p 167-192.

8 Ibid, p 169.

9 Ibid, p 182.

10 I asked my partner, Louise Rose, what she considered objective and subjective rationality to be. "No question," she replied, "the first is a tautology and the second an oxymoron."

truth? Do we refer to a psychological/cognitive explanation and suppose that there is a limitation to our "information-processing capacities"[11] or do we seek a sociological/situational explanation in which our conclusions and actions are determined by the information available in our life environment? It is in the latter sociological/situational way that Popper, Goldthorpe cites[12], takes us back to the situation as the site of study and urges that the methodological task lays there.

The relevance or otherwise of RAT comes back to the understanding we give to 'rational'. Is rational to be understood as action flowing to outcomes based on cost-benefit assessments according to pre-established and conscious utilitarian goals?

> *... rational action ... [is] ... outcome-oriented or 'consequentialist' ... in the sense that it derives from some kind of cost-benefit evaluation made by actors of the different courses of action that are available to them relative to their goals ...*[13]

This would be action based on verifiable information, action clearly not of the kind assumed to be on display in the case of cargo cults for example. Even at the severe end of utilitarian definitions of rationality, there is an acceptance that complete access to truth is not possible and notions such as that of "bounded rationality" appear.[14]

This conception constrains RAT. Goldthorpe offers two examples. Farming that is no longer economic (due to say, climatic change or price and cost shifts) but continues because 'traditional' ways of life are chosen, does not pass a consequentialist test of rationality. Similarly, continuing to act according to a social norm when such action fails to provide for an individual's welfare would not pass such a test. In these circumstances at least, Goldthorpe suggests that RAT has reached a limit.[15]

Arguments around RAT come down to identifiable testability problems. Where actions cannot be demonstrated as having utility, such as in the case of the farmer continuing to farm after continuing and disastrous cost shifts, then do we say that the actor is irrational or is it that the theory of rationality is itself too narrow to understand the utility achieved by the supposed 'irrational' action? Moreover, might it be that the irrationality

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11 Op. cit., Goldthorpe, p 182.

12 Ibid., p 174.

13 Op cit., Goldthorpe, p 179.

14 Simon, H. A., *Models of Bounded Rationality.* MIT Press, 1982. Quoted in Goldthorpe, op cit; p 171.

15 Ibid., p 180.

goes back to a psychological or biological perversity? Conversely, consider if researchers adopt the context or situation as the site for testability. Adopting the situation broadens the definition of rationality beyond the directly observable and often economic consequential utility of an action. This tactic seems to drive us down a path of infinite reframing to reinterpret successively each action. The reinterpretation, in this scenario, will of course include those actions previously thought 'rational' since the theory that so deemed them is now itself deemed sectional and cultural. What a maze! How can the RAT proceed within it?

Would such reframing be infinite? Is the quest for perfect understanding of an action or perfect representation of its rationality our task? Some RATs wonder whether rationality really disappears or whether, in fact, a historiographic or cultural reframing can indicate the area of social interaction within which an underlying rationality can be discovered. Goldthorpe adds in a note:

> *There would by now [1998] seem clear indications ... that attempts to address this issue at the level of abstract societal or cultural typologies are of limited value, and that it is far more illuminating to investigate empirically, across societies and cultures, those more particular structures and processes – at the level of social networks, group affiliations and institutions – by which patterns of action are guided into conformity with specified standards of rationality or are deflected from them.*[16]

Such discussion indicates that a situational logic can successively uncover domains of social action that enable understanding of successive layers of response by individuals and groups to their perceived immediate circumstances, their situation or, as I will term it, 'life environment'. Goldthorpe invokes the study of "social networks, group affiliations and institutions" as areas where empirical work can and does occur out of which the rationality concept may cast light on the irrational itself and so reveal deeper imperatives in human interaction. These domains are consequent on, first, known circumstances, and then, as Popper would have it, beliefs.[17] Here rationality, as we can usefully understand it, becomes irrelevant. The positional theory of this thesis strongly asserts situational analysis finding a consequentialist version of RAT too special to allow the broader discussion about social mechanisms to proceed.

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16 Op. cit., Goldthorpe, p 189.

17 Popper, K. R., "Models, Instruments and Truth" in *The Myth of the Framework*, Routledge, 1994. Quoted in Goldthorpe, op cit; p. 172.

The Manchester School

The situational approach has an antecedent in anthropology in the orientation of the Manchester School anthropologists following Max Gluckman at the University of Manchester in the 1950s and sixties and thereafter. This school of anthropological thought pursued a different mode of analysis to the mainstream of structural and functional anthropological analysis. Gluckman and his followers saw conflict as a productive way into analysis as opposed to social structure and individual role and function. Conflict presupposes social states and actors in tension, groups in discord and competing policies. Such a research policy will explain structural and functional phenomena in terms of change and continuity. The mechanisms that flow from this approach will relate the site of tension to the overarching structures that will or won't be maintained by the social responses to the tension at the site. Naturally, the tension at the site is the situation containing the actors, their beliefs and circumstances and their interactions across groups.

In *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*[18], Bruce Kapferer takes a 'situational analysis' (also known as 'extended-case analysis') attitude to the methodology developed by 'the Manchester School'. His idea in *Celebration* is that the essence of a society does not simply underlie or explain its practices, such as, for example, the ritual practices of healing. By extension, we can allow the argument to refer to social actions beyond overtly delimited practices such as these. So we may say, following Kapferer, that the structures and functions of society do not on their own explain the actions of social actors. Rather the practices, ritual and otherwise, of social actors and beyond that the actions of its groups and individuals have the potential to transform, question, rigidify and otherwise influence the supposed structure. That is, uncovering the 'structure' of a society will not reveal its operation. Rather it establishes a view of its workings at a time in its flow reflecting a range of ideational perceptions of the world allowable by the society at that time and in that political and geographic environment. This ideational range provides a series of expressive and active responses to the life environment allowing a specific set of niches or positions that are available for the people and its groups that may appear in the lived short term as a settled or normative structure. So that to develop an understanding of a society that goes beyond merely capturing its structure at a point in time,

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[18] Kapferer, Bruce, A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka; Berg: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983.

Kapferer argues that one must examine the discordances in the social connections as much as the systems.

This point can again extend to argue that it is the mechanisms of change and continuity in tension, which include structures, discordances and more, that are the proper foci of a theory of social workings. Such a theory would include an explanation of structure at an observed point in time along with the discordances that have the potential to destabilise it or to call into action mechanisms that will reinforce its rigidity.

The notion of discordance is a persuasive one. It presupposes a dominant structure or layout of social power and a concomitant will to retain it. This is *concord.* Changes within or without, changes arising from new technology or irritated, unsatisfied individuals or from groups that somehow have a more persuasive view of the world are all discord. The idea of discordance, then, starts from the 'given' at any time and is the change factor. Though I will not argue with this, since I find it persuasive, the premise is somehow rooted in our perception of dominants that persist or are overturned. It may be that the recurrence of 'overturning' itself, 'overturning' as continuity is how we should or could be viewing this flux. This would mean that a concord/discord explanation is merely a more conscious method of constructing a social flux mechanism than structure theories with revolutionary moments tacked on. Let's bear this in mind.

Victor Turner exemplifies this Manchester School approach.

> *That the pervasive theme of the book [Schism and Continuity] is conflict and the resolution of conflict arises from my predilection for the views, fast becoming a theory, of that school of British anthropologists who are coming to regard a social system as a 'field of tension, full of ambivalence, of co-operation and contrasting struggle'. For these anthropologists a social system is not a static model, a harmonious pattern, not the conceptual product of a monistic outlook. A social system is a field of forces ... whose power to persist is generated by its own socially transmuted conflicts.*[19]

The approach supports and guides my own sense of individuals and groups contending for position. In this conception, there is limited expressive and economic space. Both are limited by available and allowable ideas. Position is essential within them to maintain a sense of

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[19] Turner, V. W., Schism and Continuity in an African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life; Manchester University Press. 1957. Pxxii. Turner's quote from Gluckman, M., Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa, 1954.

self. Disruption of selfhood can be understood as alienation and loss of position or it can be fought contributing to the "field of tension ... and contrasting struggle" in Gluckman's words quoted by Turner above or felt socially as, in Turner's terms, an affliction. The latter can lead to schism and the need as in Turner's statement above for "socially transmuted conflicts".

Structure and Process.

The thesis explored here postulates social process and transformation rather than social structure. The ideas of the Manchester school with regard conflict and the preference for situational analysis over rational action indicate the concentration on tension and change rather than stasis and underlying form.

There are ideas in this thesis that have the 'look' of theoretical 'structures'. These include meta-identity, centre and rim and space of possible ideas (these and other terms I will define as they arise within the explication of interlocked mechanisms). They are structures only in the sense that they can be pictured (as I have in various figures) as representing a social formation and, by representing, are concepts enabling thought. As such, they are metaphors from which facts can be adduced and upon which facts can be placed. Theoretical structures are metaphors in this sense.

These structures are static only insofar as they describe phenomena that continue to be observed in social relations and only so long as they adequately describe observed phenomena. More importantly within this thesis, they describe collectivities, institutionalisations of ideologies and interactions at multiple levels *that exist in ongoing tension* within fields demarcated by styles sustaining claims of right. So stasis that can be observed as continuous and thus erroneously thought of as structure is only the momentary social balance of tensions amongst social entities that I have dubbed 'ideas', 'selfhoods', 'groups', 'meta-identities', 'fields', 'spaces' and so on. However, that balancing is actually processual and the appearance of stasis is a descriptive convenience. As I will show, all of these ideas are aspects of transformational process. All can be and must be pictured in flux.

Structure as scientific observation constructed as social formation must be viewed as ephemeral. If observation appears to show the continuation of say, an educational institution, it does so simply because that institution has been able to establish legitimacy through such means as to be successful in a position-taking struggle (see Bourdieu quote on page 132) over sufficient time to appear static. However, this will ignore the changes

it has undergone to maintain this position during that period. Since structure suggests stasis, it is eschewed in this study.

If anything is continuous, it is the nature of the process not the structure. I will attempt to describe mechanisms of process that explain the working out of these tensions. Therefore, the term I use in distinction to structure is 'interlocking mechanism' and terms such as 'field' or 'meta-identity' describe formations arising from positional interaction and tension.

Field Theory

I characterise this study as a 'field theory' following Kurt Lewin. A field theory is multi-factorial, topological, other-fields connected and transformational.[20] It is also contemporaneous; it has valence and vectors flowing from need and goal. It is positional as it is based on individuals with goals and needs in a 'life space' and their distance from the resources that will satisfy these. In relation to groups, theorists will add group cohesion to these factors and ideology is a factor for groups in the mounting of positional claims.

In this case, the field studied is a definable entity: professional 'adult' theatre in an Australian capital city. Studying such a field involves the theoretical organisation of a number of influencing factors. This is its multi-factorial nature. Understanding these factors as contributing to tensions over a definable space gives us its topology while placement of the field in relation to overlapping, superstructural and contained fields gives us its other-field connectedness. Finally, providing a theory of how change occurs within the field renders to us its modes of transformation.

Lewin offers an understanding of Field Theory as method:

> *Field theory is probably best characterized as a method: namely, a method of analysing causal relations and of building scientific constructs. This method of analysing causal relations can be expressed in the form of general statements about the "nature" of the conditions of change.*[21]

Thus, the field is a way of understanding and describing interlocking factors that have causal relationships. The picture is one of

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20 Shepherd, Clovis R., *Small Groups: Some Sociological Perspectives*, Chandler Publishing Company, 1964, p 25.

21 Lewin, Kurt, *Resolving Social Conflicts & Field theory in Social Science*; American Psychological Association; 1997, p 201.

interrelationship from the individual to the group, to the meta-identity and back again. This is not to describe cause as linear. The interrelationships are in continual tension with pressures for stasis and pressures for change. As far as we are able, the task is to build an understanding of mechanisms that operate together in a continuing flow emanating from the primary drive to belong and be recognised as belonging within the life environment.

'Life Environment' and the 'Space of Possible Ideas'.

I use extensively herein the terms 'life environment' and the 'space of possible ideas'.

Life environment refers to the contingent facts of each individual's experience. Thus, the geographic space they occupy is included along with the historical and emotional world that is contingent with their being. This is similar to 'lifeworld', as Habermas terms it, in that the world as it is experienced is embraced not some objectively determined world. However, 'life environment' allows for facts in the world around the individual that affect the individual but of which the individual may be unaware or that operate outside their expectation. To this extent, 'life environment' contains more than the more phenomenological 'lifeworld'.

Other terms also overlap. Lewin's 'life space', in particular has relevance to the sociological background to this work and is closer to Habermas's lifeworld. During Lewin's life he gradually expanded this idea until it included all elements that exist as affecting an individual's or a group's life. Lewin was very conscious of the interactivity of these life-determining factors. Importantly, each of these terms share the inclusion of beliefs individuals will have about their world. Lewin's term, 'life space' is closer to my 'life environment'. However both his and Habermas's term are different from the idea of social space put forward here as the 'space of possible ideas' and based on Bourdieu's 'space of possibles'. The life environment is a personal individual experience and perspective while a social space contains such perceptions while existing as the combined projection of mutually involved life environments. Moreover, the term 'life space' is too close to that of 'space of possible ideas'. I was finding out about the life environment in my interviews, while my inferences and surrounding studies were about the social spaces they occupied.

The space of possible ideas will be described in Chapter Eight and is a fundamental concept in this work. The term pictures an availability of concepts that consciously exist for human choice and are manifested as fields and groups. These concepts vary from field to field. As an ideational space, it is a space of expression. Positional action reflects the expressive style peculiar to each ideational choice. Control of niche

positions in the space of possible ideas is a constant process of stylistic demarcation and legitimation. It is the subject of discussion in these pages.

The space is never in stasis but it is delimited. The ideas of dominant groups, the constant tension arising from positional activity in fields and society as a whole and irreversible change arising from natural, technological, social or cultural events determine its delimitations. These delimitations, however, are not solid, each exert constant pressure transforming the space. Though an ideational space, the space of possible ideas overlays and intersects with a resource space. Except for its ecological aspects, which will ultimately determine the overlaid ideas, dominant groups control the resource space.

Related Research

Recent theories that are both processual and field theories include social emergence, social capital and social representation theories. All bear similarities to the present work, which shares many of their interests and concerns and the following is a brief survey of the points of contact with two of them: social emergence and social representation.

Work on "social emergence theory" has parallels to this work. Social emergence theory attempts to find mechanisms that explain how social entities such as groups and other 'structures' emerge from the interactions of individual agents. It is process concerned and conscious of adaptation.

> *It is widely acknowledged in sociology today that social theory must be centrally concerned with process and mechanism ... Nonetheless, sociologists have found it difficult to develop an adequate theory for capturing social processes, and even more difficult has been the empirical study of social processes. As a result, much of modern sociology neglects process ... Complex dynamical systems can provide tools to explore these processes; they are "dynamical" because processes of change over time are of central interest.*[22]

This quote illustrates some of the parallels to which I refer: the focus on process and mechanism, complexity and transformation over time. Other parallels include, as abovementioned, interactionism, the symbolic nature

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[22] Sawyer, R K., *Social Emergence: Societies as Complex Systems.* Cambridge University Press, 2005, p 23.

of interaction and the effect of multiple interaction on meta-systems such as groups and institutions. Sawyer urges also that systems operating at higher levels (groups and institutions) manifest laws that cannot occur at lower levels such as the level of the individual. This is seen as a property of complexity and that the reverse statement, that such laws can be seen as operating at lower levels is a reductionist property.[23]

In this thesis, I explicitly claim that the motivation of position operates as a fundamental driver at both these levels, the level of the individual in interaction and of the group and above, similarly in interaction. I would accept that many of the mechanisms discussed here are properties of social systems and not of individuals. However, my assertion of primacy for a positional motivation causes me to step back from suggesting greater convergence between social emergence theory and this thesis than I have already detailed. It leads me to an assumption of greater continuity of action between less and more complex levels of social organisation (including the level of the individual) than social emergence theory admits.

In this regard, the theory offered here has strong allegiances with social representation theory. Social representation theory first acknowledges environmental and circumstantial weight on both individuals and groups. It observes how such weight leads to 'social representations' by groups in contrast to other groups and meta-identities in society. The combined effect is of claim to position based on an ideational projection of the circumstances presented by the life environment. So, for example, in studies of illegal immigration, social representation emanates from categories to do with place of origin, illegality, race and work status. For people and groups sharing such representation the positional task is to find ways of attaining a more powerful position in which to find expression for an expanded representation, finding satisfaction in the present status or negotiating some other representation in between. Choices may include assertion of illegality as a reverse legitimacy, seeking legal status or finding the separate-but-within status of many ghettoised communities.[24]

The social representation approach, argued by Alain Clemence in the following quote, considers the arrangement of social groupings according to positions taken up by social actors vis-a-vis public debates.

> *Thus, social positioning is not only the expression of an opinion, it is also a way to process information in order to*

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23 Ibid., p 4.

24 Deaux, Kay, and Wiley, Shaun, "Moving People and Shifting Representations: Making Immigrant Identities" in Moloney, Gail and Walker, Iain, *Social Representations and Identity: Content, Process and Power*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

adapt what we think to what the society thinks. Consequently, it provides the means for articulating the variations between intergroups [sic] beliefs and knowledge with the temporary crystallization of a network of meanings in a given public sphere.[25]

Thus in taking attitudinal positions on welfare, AIDS, domestic violence or the worth of a novel, social actors refer to "common points of reference"[26] taken from their "social space"[27]. Ultimately, the point of reference then arises from group and other orientations. Clemence's construction can be applied to the work I set out here. His orientation is an ontology of communication and appears to focus on the social representations adopted in relation to argumentation.

Social representation theory is conceptualised as "Lewinian"[28] and so has a field approach in common with this thesis. However, I prefer the notion of style to social representation because the latter suggests more or less discrete units of agreement within ongoing debates while style is a claim sustaining posture suffused into the very habit and orientation of action. Though social representation theory recognises the deep and often automatic nature of representations, I am concerned with the nature of the unacknowledged, unspoken and incongruent aspects of action in contrast with the expressions of claim that I term ideology. Thus, there is much harmony between social representation theory and the present work. I would hope that future work can bridge the gaps and make possible the insights of each approach for the other.

Sociology of Art

Within the sociology of art, several streams of thinking align with this thesis. Firstly, it would not be possible to put forward the sociological view underpinning this thesis without appreciating and accepting the existence of art worlds as a prior consideration to the idea of artist as auteur. That is, the para-mystical view of the gifted artist as separated from the productive capacity of others is not a possible stance with regard to the ideas and formulations I present here. The major current trend of

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25 Clemence, Alain, "Social Positioning and Social Representations" in Deaux, Kay, and Philogène, Gina, *Representations of the Social: Bridging Theoretical Traditions*. Blackwell Publishing, 2001, p 87.

26 Ibid., p 83.

27 Ibid.

28 Op. cit., Deaux, Kay, and Philogène, Gina, Representations of the Social: Bridging Theoretical Traditions, p 4.

sociology of art emanates from the description of 'art worlds' offered by Howard Becker.

> *Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artifacts [sic]. The same people often cooperate repeatedly, even routinely, in similar ways to produce similar works, so that we can think of an art world as an established network of cooperative links among participants.* [29]

Becker sees works of art as the product of a network of participants and allows that participants can themselves decide whom to designate as artists.

> *Works of art, from this point of view, are not the products of individual makers, "artists" who possess a rare and special gift. They are, rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world's characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence. Artists are some sub-group of the world's participants who, by common agreement, possess a special gift, therefore make a unique and indispensable contribution to the work, and thereby make it art.*[30]

The notion of the art world allows for the specialness of art as distinct from, say, craft, and even from popular or folk art. That it allows for the multiplicity of art production, distribution and reception processes means that conversation is open as to the multivariate nature of the social 'fit' it represents.

Art world theory currently uses this opening to examine these socially linked aspects of art and its production. Exemplifying this is the notion of the cultural diamond, an investigative tool that illustrates the objects of investigation by the links displayed in the following cultural diamond diagram. [31]

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29 Becker, Howard S., *Art worlds*. University of California Press, 2008, pp 34-35.

30 Ibid, p 35.

31 Alexander, Victoria D, *Sociology Of The Arts: Exploring Fine And Popular Forms*. Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p 62.

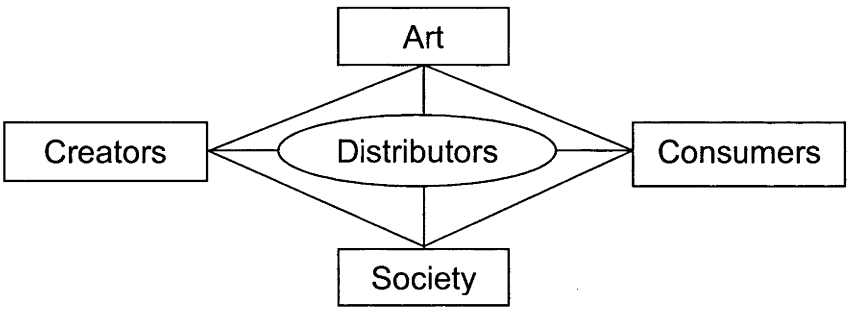

Figure 1 The Cultural Diamond

It is not my task here to review or discuss the implications of this conception of sociology of art methodology beyond pointing out the equality and simultaneous separation of creators and consumers of art. Alexander explains that

> *[the cultural diamond] critiques reflection and shaping approaches by pointing out, from the production side, that artistic conventions and production techniques, not to mention artists, influence the content of art works, and the filtering effects of distribution systems determine which cultural products reach audiences.*

This conception emphasises that between the production of art and its reception, social actions of others within systems beyond the artist interpose determining meta-artistic outcomes.

I have spoken of Bourdieu already; within the context of the sociology of art also, his contribution is important to this study. Bourdieu comprehensively describes the embeddedness of art within the positional fabric of society. In so doing, the divisions of high and popular art, for example, become divisions of distinction thus rendering an equality at least of purpose to the aesthetic value judgements of one sector of society over another. Bourdieu's work takes the sociology of art beyond a description of embeddedness to reveal the concerns that determine the nature of selection and distribution posited in the cultural diamond.

My work reflects Alexander's art world approach as indicated in the cultural diamond by placing emphasis on a legitimating feedback loop that mediates between art producers and consumers. Bourdieu's work emphasises what is legitimised: claims of precise distinctive placement in the space of ideas, which characterises social stratification and division.

Yet the mystique of the artist still has considerable hold. Noël Carroll describes this as a result of the artworld's "declaration of autonomy [during

the course of the eighteenth century] in an effort to insulate art from the claims of other social initiatives"[32] and not only the growth of bourgeois utilitarianism. From there the further reification of the art discipline as 'art for art's sake' grew in the nineteenth century followed by the formalism of the twentieth. The separation of art from its roots in ethical instruction is therefore deeply ingrained. This has also meant that its separation from social critique has been similarly marked such that social engagement in art is often controversial.

Art as ideology is another major strand in the sociology of art flowing from Marxist aesthetics and, not surprisingly, in opposition to the notion of art for art's sake. Janet Wolff sums up this approach:

> *Insofar as people, including artists, are socially and historically located, and are members of particular social groups, then their thought, including their artistic ideas, is ideological ... Unless they crudely overlook the complexities of specific groups and individuals' often contradictory position with them, theories of ideology are not reductionist but essential to analysis.*[33]

Dewey in his important philosophical work of 1934, *Art as Experience*, is not free of the view of the artist as separated from the production process. He does however bring a lasting point to our consideration that cannot be lost as we accept the truth of art worlds as representative of the art making process nor that of distinction as providing an understanding of the motivations underlying the consumption of art. Dewey's point is about the nature of art as a response to experience.

> *The material of esthetic experience in being human – human in connection with the nature of which it is a part – is social. Esthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also the ultimate judgement upon the quality of civilization. For while it is produced and is enjoyed by individuals, those individuals are what they are in the content of their experience because of the cultures in which they participate.*[34]

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32 Carroll, Noël, "Art and Alienation" in Costello, D. and Willsdon, D. (eds), *The Life and Death of Image: Ethics and Aesthetics.* Cornell University Press, 2008, p 92.

33 Wolff, Janet, *The Social Production of Art.* The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1981, p 70.

34 Dewey, John, *Art as Experience.* Capricorn Books, 1958, p 326.

In this work, and in view of the ideological content of art, I place thinking about art in relation to the ideological claim it subtends. This also corresponds with the distinctive badging enabled by art in Bourdieu's work. Simultaneously, art responds to experience. To be sure, its response borrows the style that flows appropriately from the ideology in which it is immersed. Even so and following Dewey, art, in responding to experience, that response arising as it does from its cultural embeddedness, performs a role that registers both the concord and discord in the social forms it reflects. In so registering, art shapes, in theatre, society's comedy and its tragedy and gives rise to its ritualistic actions that are, in Dewey's affirmative outlook, its "record and celebration' along with the "means of promoting its development".

In sum, the notion of art worlds enables us to understand the social nature of art to begin with and to expect that all its operations are social and can be discussed sociologically. In that art also reflects social actions, then it must be concluded that this reflection itself sits within social mechanisms and can be discussed as such.

Sociology Of Theatre

Within the sociology of art, Maria Shevtsova has developed, and written extensively within, the vein of what she calls the sociology of theatre. In some ways, it is an ambiguous notion encompassing some quite different modes of thought from analysis of theatre in society to analysis of theatre's comment on society and to the social operations of theatre. In some of Shevtsova's studies, it has related to reception theory, analyses of audience response, but in the following quote it is clear that the notion arises from the desire to recognise both that theatre is a social activity and that it reflects society.

> *... theatre art is generated by social agents in a social context and that, as a socialized and socializing action, it is full of social as well as aesthetic meaning. We could put this differently by saying that everything we think of as being art in the theatre is not purely aesthetic: what belongs to art comes out of a society ...*
>
> *These points are at the heart of the sociology of the theatre ...*[35]

[35] Shevtsova, M., Theatre and Cultural Interaction; Sydney Studies in Society and Culture 9; 1993, ppviii-ix.

Shevtsova is concerned to widen theatrical analysis by a consciousness that within it a sociological analysis is implied. It is from this approach that I began. Ultimately, however, I bring the two together in this argument by viewing theatrical analysis as a substrate of sociological analysis. Thus, theatrical analysis is seen here as either revealing and describing various forms of thought that over time have adapted theatre to the social positions available or that has offered ways of understanding theatre within the evolving perspectives offered in various periods.

In a series of articles in New Theatre Quarterly[36], Shevtsova presented an overview of the sociology of theatre. For her, the designation covers those areas of research aiming to explore theatre as it operates within varying social milieux; how it reflects, affects and is affected by, the society in which it is embedded. Her discussion opens an analysis encompassing an analytic task founded on the implications of social context.

In her opening article, she lists extensively the facets of theatre illuminable by a sociology of theatre. Combining them all

> *The discipline's task ... is explaining how and why the network of actions we call theatre - including its aesthetics ... - is social and not, say, as in the case of its art, solely a matter of individual genius, or individual inspiration and invention.*[37]

Shevtsova expresses concern that this basic understanding of theatre has not produced a larger and more comprehensive body of analysis than it has. According to Shevtsova the impediments to the development of a sociology of theatre are due largely to a dualism in thinking about theatre and society which resists the obvious embedded nature of one in the other. The dualism emanates from differing standpoints but is characterised by the divorce of content and context, a divorce that is evident in most analysis including the semioticians and the structuralists and in the treatment of theatre craft as an aesthetic study to the exclusion of it as a social examination.

There is seldom, for example, consideration given to how social, political and economic factors determine what transpires in a rehearsal situation. Factors such as the economic and social background of cast members, the identity formation of each individual and the group itself, the social and political chemistry of their grouping, the economics and status of the

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36 Shevtsova, Maria; "The Sociology of Theatre ... [Parts One to Three]."; New Theatre Quarterly", V5 Nos.17 - 19, Feb, May, Aug, 1989.

37 Shevtsova, Maria; "The Sociology of Theatre, Part One: Problems and Perspectives."; New Theatre Quarterly, V5 No 17, Feb, 1989; p. 24

company and any other factor that brings pressure to bear on the decisions which amount to what we glibly term *creation*. These sorts of factors influence the focus that practitioners finally offer audiences and thus the view of culture they attempt to impart.

More recently, Shevtsova has tied the Sociology of Theatre into the perspectives offered by Bourdieu, which sits firmly within the thrust of this work. Apart from drawing on Bourdieu's statement that "everything is social" and emphasising the decisively art world nature of theatre and its dependency upon other fields including the economy, government and law, she also invokes its positional nature.

> *Thus position, as Bourdieu understands it, might signal the difference between an immigrant community-based theatre group in Copenhagen and, say, the established company at the Betty Nansen Theatre, also in Copenhagen, working in the year 2000 on Woyzeck with Robert Wilson. The difference in type of theatre places these groups differently in geographically, in terms of the city; spatially, in terms of venue: and financially, in terms of the funding and other capital invested in the working process. At the same time, how they are placed feeds their predisposition for the shows they mount. This includes their choice of repertoire and performance style.*[38]

Shevtsova's concern is to understand how the placement of theatres within their culture and more especially their geo-polity has a major bearing on the work they do and how they go about it.

Thus, the sociology of theatre implies a deeper set of cultural questions about theatre production. This thesis also takes the route as Shevtsova goes on to do of finding ways in which Bourdieu's "position-taking" approach does not sufficiently address the reasons for making theatre in the first place. This explains my interest in examining how the work of Victor Turner complements what Shevtsova has correctly drawn from Bourdieu above.

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38 Shevtsova, Maria, "Outside in: theatre, networks and interdisciplinary perspectives" in Kelly, V. and Hunter, M. A., (Eds.), *Australasian Drama Studies*, N44, April 2004. P 7.

Theoretical Scaffolding

The underpinning assertion of this thesis is that seeking position is fundamental to individual motivation and that this flows through to the motivation of groups. Since this assertion begins with the individual and the source of his/her motivation, this study begs a discussion of identity. The central difficulty in discussion of identity is the conundrum about where it arises, from the 'self' as a matter of choice within the life environment or is it conferred by group processes. Stuart Hall enables negotiation of this difficulty by recognising individuality while acknowledging strong and unconscious group, meta-group and normative influences on individuals.

In considering the actor acting a role where the portrayed character is a representation, we are forced to study identity in the light of the human ability to adopt a 'persona' in everyday life; i.e. to play a role while considering themselves to have an identity, a sense of oneness in themselves able to take action. By 'persona' I mean the deliberate adopting of a role for an interactive purpose; the naughty child affecting a shamed face or the speaker looking confident in the midst of his/her nervousness. As representation invokes the matter of style, it is therefore impossible to consider identity without considering style. The work of Hebdige[39] demonstrates this in that he considers the amalgamation of individuals into groups denoted by a recognisable similarity of style one to the other to the extent that they form a demarcated group, demarcated by their style. His case study is 'punk' and his work contributes to this study in Chapter Seven (see on page 120).

With reference to Mary Douglas's work, I draw on her book *How Institutions Think* in which she discusses *inter alia* the work of Ludwik Fleck enabling a thickening of this thinking about the operation of groups and organisations.[40] Fleck developed the idea of society as an amalgam of "thought collectives" each with their own "thought style". Each collective has a centre and a rim, the centre being the point of origination of the style and the rim being the membership that literally follows the ideas of the centre. As Douglas puts it:

> *He [Fleck] envisaged many thought worlds, each with its centre and rim, intersecting, separating, and merging.*[41]

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39 Hebdige, Dick, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Methuen, 1979.

40 Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

41 Ibid, p. 14.

Douglas extends this idea considering the agreed categories of thought that groups and institutions impose and through which the ordering of identity offered by institutional and group membership can be achieved. At this point, the unspoken nature of much of the normative in groups is considered. Douglas employs the work of Jon Elster here and I apply this work to demonstrate how these unspoken ideas can not only maintain the formal ties of a group but achieve results that may not be intended by the group or its membership but that nevertheless achieves a kind of identity-conferring operation that maintains position. Habermas's discussion of the unacknowledged and Geertz's essay on commonsense support this work.

In moving from the individual to the group, Pierre Bourdieu offers encompassing bridging theories. His theory of distinction[42] very readily picks up the notion of style demarcation, already an idea I am applying to groups, and projects it on a society-wide scale. Within his scheme, he establishes a notion of a space of possibles, which I have adapted as a space of possible ideas within which distinction is constrained. This space of possible ideas is an important delimiting factor, one to which I have already alluded and which will become an important explanatory concept in the following pages. The space of possible ideas delimits operational space determining that the niches available in which companies, groups and individuals may operate are finite.

Without adopting Jürgen Habermas' project of discovering the terms under which can be found a continuation of the socialist project, his discussion of the conditions of legitimacy enable us to understand the definitions and adoptions necessary for groups in order to maintain their appearance of right over claim to place. For Habermas, claims to space are tested insofar as they relate to the external or physical world as truth claims but with regard to the social world, they are tested as claims of legitimacy.[43] The legitimacy of claims is also tested by their comprehensibility and by their relation to subjective assessments of truthfulness. These tests raise the bar, as it were, for claiming success. There are implications especially for the difficulty of transformation by 'direct assault' but also for legitimacy over time without adequate maintenance of position.

With regard to ritual, I draw upon the work of Victor Turner, a Manchester School anthropologist, extensively. His observation of liminal spaces, actual spaces on the margins of the physical life environment to which humans withdraw for particular ritual purposes, affords an insight into the

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42 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* (trans: Richard Nice), Harvard University Press, 1984.

43 Habermas, Jürgen, (trans: McCarthy, Thomas) *The Theory of Communicative Action.* 2 Volumes, Polity Press, 1984.

way ideational space overlays physical space. Within the liminal spaces that Turner describes for us, we can see in various kinds of ritual both their transmissional or validatory actions as well as their transformational power. In his study of rituals of affliction, transformation does not come as an easily sought object but rather as the change that occurs when the ideational structure can no longer support the weight of events. Equally, his notions of social drama and communitas afford us insight into the broad actions of humans dealing with discord and humans experiencing community. His work fits into the general thrust and philosophy of the Manchester School of anthropology that is one of the key influences on my approach.

Consequently, in the liminoid practice of theatre, ritual performs two broad functions in continuity with the rest of society. The first is the validatory one where the style and the events thus clothed on stage fortify the life environmental outlook and positional ideologies of the patronage. The second is the projection of tensions that exist in the positional balance of groups and individuals. In the second is the reflexive element of liminoid functions with the potential for redress and transformation.

Walter Benjamin's long essay *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*[44] enables extension of this idea by showing how changed technologies (he discusses photography and film in particular) produce profound changes in the way humans view artefacts and how, as a result, the aura that once was associated with them is forever altered. I extend this idea into a discussion of the effect of inevitable, inexorable underlying change bringing about an education of perception. Thus, not only the weight of events sets up a transformational pressure but also the associated movement in perception, lays the ground for ultimate stylistic and ideological inundation of archaic, thereby unsupported, styles with the new and eventfully relevant.

The Marxist tradition centres alienation as a state of being. As Marxism recognises a class-banded social space it is centrally concerned with the idea of position as ruling class and working classes, the latter unconscious of their class status while in a state of exploitation. The Marxist idea of the dominant ideas being those of the ruling classes, finds much agreement in these pages as does the idea of hegemony. I see both as crucially affecting the space of possible ideas.

Though I am using a theatre case study to illustrate social operations in general, the fact that theatre has a ritual, in Turner's terms liminoid,

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[44] Benjamin, Walter, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, Arendt, Hannah (Ed). Schocken Books, 1969.

dimension continually enables us a perspective on the reflexive in social operations. This applies also to the notion of alienation, which we have already seen is essential to understanding the imperative motivational power of position. In this respect, the literary criticism of Northrop Frye is especially pertinent in his discussion of what he calls the secular scripture, romance.[45] For Frye the central theme of romance is alienation and the recurrent eking out of this theme forms one of the major actions of literature and theatre.

The actor represents other people when playing a part and yet is a person/social player. In representing other people, s/he reflects the positioning imperative while acting on it him/herself. This is also true of groups, including theatre companies. Thus, theatre is a positioning case study while processing a socially reflexive role. Its reflexivity has secular ritual purpose. This fact will enable us to observe how the stabilising and transforming roles of ritual form a constituent in the general mechanism of positioning vis-a-vis the ideational space. Precisely because of the overtly group operations of theatre combined with its intrinsic reflexive role, we may observe this ritual operation perhaps more clearly in theatre than in many other forms of human activity.

The following chapter rounds out this introductory part with a discussion of the study's methodology. In particular, I will consider methodological problems associated with being 'inside' the case study as a professional and how this reflexive position is balanced with that of observer. The chapter considers paradox as a key to understanding and goes on to describe the nature of the fieldwork. Finally, the chapter describes the use of plays devised with social participants (termed 'fables of identity') as providing insights into the mechanisms described theoretically.

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[45] Frye, Northrop, The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance, Harvard University Press, 1976

Chapter 3. Methodology: Problems and Decisions

In this chapter, I discuss several issues with regard to methodology. These are self-reflexivity, inquiry, observation and the significance of paradox. I outline the nature and breadth of my fieldwork and its significance to this study. My use of 'fables of identity', two dramas devised with and performed by young people, is described and explained.

Being Inside, Remaining Outside: Experience as Data and the Scientific Method.

A methodological aspect of this study is that many of the circumstances of my professional practice as theatre director are its observable phenomena. At the time of the case study, I directed a theatre company funded from the same state government arts funding pool as those in this study. The difference that causes me not to include that company (Harvest Theatre Company) in the study is that it didn't seek to find a niche within Adelaide itself. Rather Harvest toured regional South Australia and its funding agreement specifically required it not to operate in Adelaide. Even so, Harvest drew on many of the same actors, often used the same rehearsal space, worked with the same union and was officed in Adelaide.

How is objective distance obtained? This is a misleading question. It supposes the inability to observe from within the phenomenon observed. Observation from without also brings with it pitfalls: the tasks of learning language, of understanding culture, of awareness of one's own prejudiced standpoint and of separating the phenomena that result from one's observation as opposed to the actual phenomena of the cultural quotidian and events. The practitioner observing from within, privy to the culture of the industry can thus divest him/herself from some of these pitfalls though having to manage others.

I have never had any doubt either that using experience is a vastly important technique for wresting understanding from the examination of phenomena or that experience can be distanced sufficiently to qualify as examination. Using experience is a process of application of conceptual tools to the data one experiences and reconstructing our understanding of the data with these tools. In the process, contrasts and paradoxes indicate deeper operations of social activity. I found support for this approach in a paper by David Russell about the intellectual process leading to the changing of the name of the University of Western Sydney social sciences department to include the idea of Social Ecology. This description of a four step alternative scientific process is consistent with

the proposal made in this thesis. Here is Russell's description of the four steps.

> *... we have found it useful to depict a four-step process of doing science which is not dependent on either prediction or quantification for its integrity. Given that we are not accepting the existence of a knowable reality independent of the act of the observer, then science can best be described as follows:*
>
> 1. *describing a phenomenon that has been experienced and doing this in a way that allows others to agree or disagree as to its existence;*
> 2. *proposing an explanation for the existence of this described phenomenon. This explanation functions as a 'generative mechanism' in the sense that, when the mechanism operates, the phenomenon appears;*
> 3. *deducing from the first experience other experiences, that are coherent with the first, and which would result from the operation of this mechanism that has been proposed as an explanation; and finally,*
> 4. *experiencing the other phenomena that were deduced in step (3).*
>
> *While quantification is not essential to this process it is often useful in the deductive phase of step 3.*
>
> *In essence, I am saying that in using these criteria of what constitutes science, we begin with an experience and end with an experience. We explain experience with experience and the generated explanation always remains secondary to the world of daily living.*[46]

Where does this departure from 'scientific method' take us? All contentions, hypotheses and laws are open to the uncovering of phenomena that challenge, refute or refine them. Conventionally, a hypothesis is framed to test a theory by a result it predicts. Testing involves the elimination of factors such that the phenomenal factor can be observed as obeying the hypothesis or not. The observation is tested against a 'control' group with the phenomenal factor eliminated. This scientific experience is reported inviting critique that sets up the circumstances for challenge, refutation or refinement. This process may be set out as:

1. describing a phenomenon that has been observed

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[46] Russell, David; "Social Ecology Education and Research", a paper describing the underpinnings of the change in title of a University of Western Sydney academic department to the above title. Website deleted, authority checked with author.

2. proposing a testable hypothesis that explains, or proposes a causal mechanism for, the observed phenomenon
3. setting up and enacting a test in order to either confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis' prediction
4. the process and the result of the test are reported for review.

How do the two approaches compare? Leaving aside the self-reflexive aspect, we are left with almost no difference. The self-reflexive aspect of the approach adopted by Russell and his associates at Western Sydney causes significant changes of vocabulary. In particular replaces 'observation' with 'experience'. 'Experience' acknowledges the interior position of the researcher within the phenomena or at least within the active environment of the phenomena whereas 'observation' distances the phenomena to object status within an environment outside of which the observer is considered to be. The other important difference is the notion of a description of phenomena that is accessible to criticism at the moment the description is offered. This point is noticeable in some of Russell's other examples. In citing a study involving sheep farming practices, Russell speaks of the study proceeding with the active involvement of the farming community.[47] The description is accessible and testable from within the environment of the phenomena, that is from the perspective of experiential knowledge.

The caveat to this approach resides in the extent to which the revelation of a law of social (or other scientific operation) is acceptable to the 'experienced community'. Does the scientific revelation put at risk norms and observances of the group whose experience is required to test it? This is a problem in the scientific community where 'objective distance' is purportedly a principle of practice. However, as Thomas Kuhn points out, science proceeds on the substratum of paradigm and there will be understandable resistance to changes of viewpoint:

> *Because the unit of scientific achievement is the solved problem and because the group knows well which problems have already been solved, few scientists will easily be persuaded to adopt a viewpoint that again opens to question many problems that had previously been solved. Nature itself must first undermine professional security by making prior achievements seem problematic.*[48]

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47 Op. cit., Russell, "Social Ecology Education and Research".

48 Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, The University of Chicago Press, 3rd edn, 1996; P179.

The realm of ideology, the claim justifying position, operates as much in the scientific realm as in any other including sheep husbandry.

Apart from the noted differences, crucial though they are, the two approaches to scientific method correspond involving hypothesis, prediction, test and review. Each has its pitfalls against which review and the openness to disproof must guard. The experienced insider stance is the methodological pathway adopted, *ipso facto*, for the study at hand.

Paradox as Method.

Drawing from experience as a practising director, I had often observed the role of cultural constraints on theatre decision-making practices in all areas of theatre. In some, it may have been more obvious than in others. Programming seems to illustrate this well. As a ratio for programming, an old adage was 'three for the audience and one for us'. The adage means that for survival at the box office a program that did not try to make at least three out of four productions box office 'pleasers' was likely to ruin the theatre. Yet the same program had to return to the artists an opportunity for 'artistic expression' if the whole operation were not to become a hollow enterprise for the participants. How that three is to be determined becomes a complicated calculation. For what will please at the box office? Who lines up there? What is the audience? What to them is artistic? Do they want only 'to be entertained'? Is 'art' to be avoided or is a certain amount of 'art' a guarantee of 'quality'? Should the 'art' reside in the excellence of 'craft', in the presentation of philosophic content or both? These questions and others are the stuff of programming.

The questions above presuppose a company presenting adult fare to a general audience. We can bring such companies to mind. Though these questions and many like them will occupy the collective minds of theatre companies, other considerations surround and presuppose them. From what sector of culture does a company draw its audience? One company may seek out and go to its audience not waiting for them to come to it. Another company has demonstrated to an arm of government that what it has to say to a specific part of the population (schools' audiences or children or workers in their lunch hours) is worth subsidising. Patronage of benevolently disposed government as well as audience becomes part of the mix, as are other forms of support such as sponsorship and the willingness of actors to cut deals for their involvements.

How does change in cultural focus affect any of these companies? How do they allow for and reflect change? How do they understand themselves in contradistinction to each other? How do they ensure that their

audiences and other patrons accept and continue to support these contradistinctions? Theatre companies address and answer each of these questions concerning the niche of their work within both their cultural and economic milieu and their political and professional (craft competence) ability to improve and maintain that niche. The ways in which the operations of theatre company decision-making address these questions nest into universal social questions of cultural transmission and change. A study of decision-making will uncover social mechanisms, drawing our attention to mechanisms posed before or that we may infer now.

Notions of aesthetic choice and intention form most thinking about theatrical decisions and these notions tend to make much of central personalities. However, post-modern theory questions both the centrality of such personalities along with the reliability of ideas such as cultural unity. These are ideas with elements of truth, but when reified as determining ideas they deny the complex interplay of social forces that produce decisions including aesthetic decisions. In fact, something quite different is occurring from what we are told is occurring. Claims about 'auteur' brilliance in a single director, for example, nest within an interplay of forces and support a particular claim about practice exemplified by the bruited personality. Part of the 'brilliance' may well be the manipulation of the social forces engaged in production, but the idea of lone brilliance is a convenient, strategic and an inadequate if not disingenuous idea. Of the many paradoxes that appear when the daily actions of theatre are scrutinised, this is one. If it is the case that the claims contradict the actions, then we may assume that a significant disjunction is continually at work in the mechanisms of social interaction. This thesis makes such an assumption.

Can we say that the outward statements of belief made by theatre companies and practitioners provide the motivation for their observable actions? It can often be observed that theatre companies do act according to their professed beliefs. The Italian language funded theatre company at the time of study in Adelaide, Doppio Teatro, quite clearly pursued a specific cultural purpose of presenting theatre both in the Italian language and featuring Italian-Australian themes and stories, which naturally related to the native roots of its founder and her compatriots. This sat well within a multicultural paradigm of government support. Yet, the existence of one automatically meant the unlikelihood of the existence of others. Teatro Oneiron, a contemporary Greek community company, stood in the wings and never came out. Would Doppio have stepped aside? Would Doppio have advanced half its funding to give Oneiron a place in the light? Would Oneiron had the situation been reversed? Would either divide their funds

to supply equally all cultural groups that desired to test their theatrical voice?

The answer to these questions is somewhere between 'no' and 'unlikely'. It is this unsurprising observation that causes us to observe that stated beliefs somehow sit with, rather than behind, the actions of attaining and maintaining position. Yet it is at this statements-of-belief surface that discourse occurs. Discourse of actual value to the company must contain something else coded within the belief discourse indicating an understanding and furthering of the position of the company.

It is likely that were such a suggestion made (i.e., division of funds to all comers having a claim to 'theatre for cultural diversity'), the response would invoke a different set of values and equally firmly held 'principles'. For example, it may be said that the fund, while supporting cultural diversity, also emphasises 'professional standards and practices'. The ideology is nuanced to protect position both from the siege of other professionals and from the siege of others who may wish to flex their own 'cultural diversity'. Were we to feel the spirit of Machiavelli behind this we would be correct but we would miss the point in the disparaging nature of that tag. Instead, it is instructive to recognise that ideology promotes legitimacy and that legitimacy protects position by justifying powerful and position-protecting alliances that in turn determine economic and expressive space. The space is a platform to realize expression and to serve the patronage that protects position: i.e., each company's version of 'three for them and one for us'. Therefore, though companies may often make efforts to act according to their stated beliefs, it is paradoxically so that the outward statements of belief made by theatre companies and practitioners do not provide the motivation for their observable actions.

There is another paradox here. The championed ideology is not the motivator. Yet this is the impression that most players will expect listeners and observers to accept (and must come to 'believe' themselves, quieting their minds to the pragmatic actualities underlying their statements). Rather, ideology is a necessary aspect of the maintenance and attainment of position. This is not a chicken and egg argument, ideology flows from position.. Ideology is a tool to establish legitimacy, which is a necessary factor defining the alliances of position. Though ideology can be keenly felt because it is chosen in relation to the identity formations of earlier positions and ardently espoused, it is not ideology but position that is the primary motivator.

These disjunctions, observable both in my practice and in my observations of practice and understandable as paradoxes, became an interesting and basic study. I was aware of them in my own practice and aware that one

becomes attached to the arguments one raises in support of what one does. I interviewed practitioners who were entirely 'passionate' about the beliefs they averred motivated their practice. Practitioners separate pragmatism as a distinct and different mode of operation. Certainly it had a different 'look' or 'style' from the expression of passionate belief, yet both pragmatism and passion served the same ends, both could fail or succeed and both could be part of the unacknowledged, unspoken and necessarily hidden activities of our group and organisational belongings. Such personal experience and knowledge of the paradoxes that theatre in its own way plays out on a daily basis, informs my 'data'.

Fieldwork

My fieldwork followed two lines, observations of rehearsal and interviews with practitioners. Observations of rehearsals occurred at three of the case study companies studied and at others. Of the case study companies, observations of rehearsals occurred at Junction Theatre Company (Junction), the STCSA and at the Red Shed but not at Doppio Teatro (Doppio) or Vitalstatistix (Vitals).

I conducted interviews with practitioners in directorial positions in each of the case study companies. Three of these were artistic directors (Geoff Crowhurst from Junction, Theresa Crea from Doppio and Simon Phillips from the STCSA), one an executive producer (Chris Westwood also from the STCSA), a co-artistic director (Margie Fischer from Vitals) and two directorial members of the Red Shed Theatre Collective, Tim Maddock and David Carlin. I also interviewed Managers and Promoters (Robert Love, General Manager and Cherie LeCornu, Promotions Manager at STCSA), actors and theatre trainers working with the case study companies. I interviewed former Artistic Directors of the Nimrod including John Bell, Richard Wherrett and Ken Horler, and former actors and producers at the APG. (A full List of Interviews can be found in the Bibliography of Primary Sources.)

For my interviews with theatrical practitioners, I developed a short list of questions in order to allow comparison from one interviewee to another. These questions concerned purpose, company and individual role and allowed interviewees to expand upon their personal story and their perspective on the story of which they felt themselves to be a part. Thus, simple comparison was not possible. Inevitably, interviews and observations followed their own paths and answers naturally tended down paths unique to each interviewee. Encouraging these paths in order to extend one's understanding was as important as maintaining the structure

of the interview that the base questions offered. At times, I would return to some practitioners (sometimes, as in the case of Christine Westwood, over years) while in others I would talk to a number of members of the same company.

I found that conversation with interviewees reinforced the general picture presented by the rehearsal process. This picture was of the application of roughly similar processes and techniques reinforcing the view that practitioners were participating professionally in a professional activity. Being a participant in these processes, I knew them to be true to the unremarkable extent that if one proceeds according to a set of techniques a theatre production will result. There were variations, often quite wide, but a given in discussion was the presumption of professionalism in outlook and action. That presumption made the players legitimate, justifying their right to operate. Another given was the uniqueness of the work, its specialness in the geo-political pocket of activity in which it occurred.

Observations of rehearsals at companies referred to in this study and detailed above bore out the above-noted professionalism of technique and process. In addition, each varied according to the 'style' of the company and its difference from each of the others, its special place. As a practitioner myself, I was able to understand the significance of the observed work in terms both of expectation of final product and of how what I was seeing related to what had been or would be said by director, actor or administrator in interview.

In summary, the similarities between these companies could be found in their overall process from rehearsal to production, in an understanding of styles and genres available for use by practitioners and of how these might be understood and reacted to by audiences. They could be found also in their understanding of, and ability to work with, the techniques of each craft that contribute to the production process from acting and writing to costuming, design, lighting, stage management and prop-making. The differences amounted to the ideological claims for different status, market and purpose within broadly the same area of work.

Noting ideological differences between companies led to inquiry as to where these claims arose both from the points of view of the practitioners and from an understanding of cultural knowledge of the time. This work presents that enquiry as several interwoven streams. The first is the immediate context itself including the evolution of an Adelaide theatre scene especially from a period when the primary focus was amateur to one where that focus became professional.

In this context, my observations and research are into theatre companies existing in a defined geo-polity and thus having specific constraints on growth. I am interested in the adoption of position by groups in a space limited by funds and patronage. In so vying, companies act within this space much as individuals do in groups and as all groups will within an ideational space. Observations of these companies will signify the belonging of a group to a 'space of possible ideas' and show how this space delimits choice of position. A corollary will be the absence of acknowledgment of this state or situation within the sanctioned claims of belief and ideology that constitute company justifications.

Secondly, the context in which the niches of work present in the first half of the nineties arose, belonged to a period of cultural change dating from the late sixties and finding their major theatrical expression in a Sydney company, the Nimrod Theatre, and Melbourne company, the Australian Performing Group (APG). Particular aspects of the progress, styles and ideologies of these companies are applied to enable an understanding of the niche claims of the Adelaide companies discussed herein. The progress of these companies had the power to affect the space and create 'legends'. In turn, the legends then determined and defined the subsequent paradigm.

'Fables of Identity'

Parallel with this discussion on identity are two 'fables of identity'. They are scenarios of plays devised with two different groups of young people and form part of the method engaged to derive understanding of the different sociological processes involved in this study. By 'devised', I mean that the plays resulted from discussions with young people about themes of their experience including belonging to school groups, rejection and proofs of suitability to belong. The discussions elaborated individual and group interactions that might regularly occur amongst the exchanges within their life environment.

Plays like these come across as having the simplicity of fables. To borrow a title from Northrop Frye, they are 'fables of identity'[49] where the momentary matter of a tiny piece of fiction representing a small corner of reality has a demonstrative resonance capable of explaining human and social phenomena.

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[49] Frye, Northrop, *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology*. Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963.

These plays and the process they exemplify, illustrate potential for them as a form of research. Such projects are a method of garnering experience, they reveal the nuances of experience and they can test its ramifications through the applied experimentation of role-play. Russell's alternative experiential approach to scientific method (see on page 47) allows for such an approach to research. What occurs in these projects is the examination of recreated experience by the experiencers and observers. In the school peer group examples employed in this thesis, the experience replicated is of the actions of these peer groups whose members are the experiencers and observers. Their response to the role-plays is an examination of the replication of experience in which the authenticity of the replication is tested against their experience.[50] As experiential research, the establishment of authenticity provides observational validity allowing the process to explore themes and record varieties of behaviour allowing crystallisation of a group's current view about their life environment and its meaning/s.

The resultant scenarios of two such projects are reproduced here to illustrate, amongst others, the themes of alienation and the price of belonging. Thus, these 'fables' are used here as keynotes, drawn from experiential research, providing insight by analogy from the understandings of particular groups into the general aspects of the behaviour of individuals and groups. The first is of individuals who are, as it were, 'de-positioned' or excluded from group membership and explores alienation, while the second is of groups and their constituent members who have attained position and act to preserve it.

Concurrently these projects exemplify the duality or parallelism of theatre (as composed of group and individual social players while reflexively commenting upon social activity). In content, the plays comment, reflexively, on the nature of participants' experiences. In performance, the plays share this record of experience, in Dewey's terms, with the groups' audiences. At the same time, events occurring in aspects of their life environment that brought them together, events of school or family life, continued to operate during the process and so reflect the precise circumstances moment to moment upon which their play comments.

A production of a Neil Simon play or a David Williamson or a William Shakespeare may not seem to demonstrate this parallelism as directly and yet the only differences are that the actors themselves pursue their

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[50] Afterwards role-plays may be adapted to examine alternative behaviours that might lead to desired outcomes. This application amounts to a group-determined social investigation having much in common with the description Turner gives of some Ndembu rites with a social healing object (see on page 87).

positioning activities in circumstances that may be separate from or that only overlap with the patronage with which they are having this ritual 'conversation'. This only emphasises however, the diffuse nature of broader society. The schoolyard is really only an enforced close relationship, the space being therefore less tolerant of difference, and so there is less opportunity for a diversity of ideas to occupy this constrained space disallowing in turn the growth of other groups.

The following part considers identity from two sides. The first assumes belonging and ability to establish belonging and the second considers the circumstances in the absence of belonging or the presence of exclusion. The assumption of the first chapter allows us to observe the meaning of identity, what constitutes it and how individuality operates. The conclusion is that selfhood, as I will term that part of us we like 'to call our own', is indissoluble from identity that is conferred by our memberships of groups and organisations.

The second chapter emphasises this indissolubility by considering the obverse of position, alienation. In this state, even selfhood is difficult to maintain against the sense of refusal of aspired-to groups to confer membership and thus the identity benefits of belonging. We discover that alienation, through the work of Northrop Frye, is a central theme of romance, which becomes in turn central to the purpose of ritual activity.

PART 2.

I AND/OR WE: THE POSITIONAL DETERMINATION OF ALIENATION AND IDENTITY.

What is determinate about the desire for position is the desire only. The desire for position and the movement arising gives rise to a sense of insubstantiality and change and the unreliability of firm statements of belief, project, claim, reason and identity. We attempt to give position substantiality by pointing to instances of sameness or continuity over time. Such instances of continuity might include existence within our body or, by extension, a familiar workplace or family or nation at which we work assiduously for connection. These instances of continuity are like invitations to accept an illusion of substantiality we dub identity. The space of possible ideas is the space within which we seek identity as individuals or seek to establish group identity.

> *'Identity' ... is thus a sign for the stability of the world and indirectly also for the certainty and reliability of our knowledge about it.*[51]

In this part, I will begin with the problematic question of identity. Is identity conferred or is it a matter of choice? Is it social or is it role? Now we encounter a problem of circularity since group and individual identity are indissolubly intertwined. To speak of one is to summon up the effect of the other. Thus, the relationship of individual identity to group identity is a fundamental dynamic for groups and feeds into both social transmission and transformation. Our belonging to groups contributes to the building of our identity. Conversely, the way we respond to the conferring of identity by groups reflects back into the operations of groups. Groups and individual identity make an indissoluble circle and are difficult to understand separately.

Given this indissolubility, I will attempt to present a way of looking at both that enables us to proceed with an understanding of how groups operate as mechanisms of belonging and expression around the drive for position by individuals. I will present how expression constitutes an active claim on space within a group and how, in turn, groups then vie for and defend position vis a vis both the groups with whom they are contingent and the fields of which they are part.

The structure of the Part is based on two chapters. The first focuses on individual identity and how it is formed in relation to position. Individual identity is broken into two notions: conferred identity as that of self that is conferred by group membership and selfhood as that part of individuality that one senses as continuing throughout experience.

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[51] Wagner, Peter. "Identity and Selfhood as a Problématique" in Friese, Heidrun (ed). *Identities: Time, Difference and Boundaries.* Berghahn Books, 2002, p 48.

In this chapter, I will present 'self-description' as an action in circumstances where events may disturb the stasis of our various positions and the security of our sense of identity. Such events can be celebratory or catastrophic. They may be relatively minor. In any case, they cause a disturbance to the settled sense of identity and may give rise to reflection. In all these cases whether in detailed reflection or as reactive affect, self-description will occur.

When self-description occurs, it carries a greater conception of individual self or selfhood as opposed to the identity that is conferred purely by membership, which results in the adoption of style reflective of group legitimacy. Clearly, group-conferred identity will feed back into self-description but the process of making out the adequacy of personal 'fit' with the group means that selfhood is a significant area that remains individual and is not simply group-conferred.

The second chapter of this Part presents the obverse, disconnected side of position: alienation. In it I will make use of the first of two stories (*Chelsea*[52] and *The Story of Larry and Ben*[53]) developed dramatically with groups of young people. *Chelsea* illustrates the alienating effect of exclusion on an individual. Anxiety about alienation, the obverse of position and a condition of existence outside of acknowledged or recognised position, provides understanding as to why position should be our fundamental motivation.

We adopt styles and use them to position ourselves. Therefore, the group occupies an available niche amongst the available ideas it can claim and so establishes a claim on resource space for its expressive activity. The style that expresses this ideational niche denotes the claim. Thus, style sustains the legitimacy. For individuals in their choice of identification with a group, it is the style available to them to adopt.

Yet in claiming position, our actions also attempt to displace others or claim them in alliance. Any action of this kind is a de- or re- positioning not only of ourselves but also of the relative positions of others. Our positioning acts can be interpreted as, or be, assaults on the positions of

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52 Fry, Garry. *Chelsea*. A replay, group devised drama project developed for the Messengers Program of the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, 2003.

53 Fry, Garry. *The Story of Larry and Ben*. A replay, group devised drama project developed for the Bungee High School Drama Program of the Belconnen Community Service, 2005. Scenario developed by David Temme and Andrew Lovering.

others, on the one hand, or offers of alliance on the other. These actions have implications for individual identity itself since a decision to exclude brings with it the possibility of alienation.

In considering alienation, the question arises as to individual resilience to the tensions surrounding position. Investigating the role of resilience, I will expand further the nexus between groups and the individual. This leads to the notion of integration as the object of quest in romance after the hardships of alienation and displacement. In so considering romance, Northrop Frye introduces us to a ritual element in our storying centrally related to alienation and pointing to the ever-present need to balance the tensions of our positioning struggles.

Chapter 4. Conferred Identity and Selfhood.

In all acts of placement and displacement from attending a class or seminar to joining a football club, shopping, waging war or negotiating a treaty, the tension in the positioning exercise lies in balancing the urge to compete and attack with the concomitant need to co-operate. This need assumes mechanisms of identifying those with whom co-operation is possible and at what level. For example, when the sense of nationhood is strong, we may decide that the national colours, despite the demarcation of style between groups within the nation, subsume any need we may feel to identify local colours within the national. That is, we may well decide that the meta-identity of nationality overrides the local obligation. Who belongs in the network of co-operation and at what remove from the centre, involves a complex and often-unconscious series of assessments and reactions.[54] Such mechanisms are based on reading (interpreting) the styles presented by others. The resulting acts of placement and exclusion reflect identity claims that shade all other surrounding identities into a spectrum from close to distant to exclusion.

Identity: Problems and Definitions.

What is this 'identity' so assaulted by the repositions of all around it? Placeholders in a social structure struggle to retain stability by resisting movement and offering ongoing identifications in order to maintain belongings as part of the maintenance of a stable position. There is a tendency to fracture, that Hebdige describes in punk culture (see on page 120) that undermines and challenges the struggle for stability. How can a semblance of single identity persist? But it does seem to. Or does it?

To position oneself is to seek identification. The act of identification, the claim of oneness with and of belonging, exists in relation to others and in the formation and maintenance of groups. It is economic, social and expressive, depending on groups and others for resources, interaction and response, as well as for recognition and acceptance. Identity exists in the seeking of connections and then the assertion of what is conferred by these others we have sought and the entities with whom we join. What is found when one joins a group, a club or becomes part of a sub-culture? These amalgamations themselves shift and alter, seeking position and asserting identity.

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[54] In the chapter "Ideology, Belonging and Legitimacy: the Contribution of the 'Unacknowledged' to the Maintenance of Legitimacy" (see on page 225), I will discuss what constitutes the 'unconscious' from the positional perspective.

To aid understanding of the nature of identity, I will draw distinctions between identity, persona, selfhood and identification. I will use 'selfhood' referring to a sense of self that we sense as persisting and/or that we desire and aspire to over time and that seems to persist from one group or social setting to another. Therefore, 'selfhood' is the term I will use to describe the sensation of self to which common usage would assign the term 'identity'.

Identity, though often used in a way that means what I have defined selfhood to mean, is more useful as a description of a less aware and less self-described state. There has been considerable discussion as to the inadequacy of the notion of identity. Arguments are raised that suggest, as does this thesis, that it is the nesting in experience with all its attachments and discourses that makes the person and that is a more useful way of viewing individuality than a *chosen* selfhood. Further, that in describing reality, it makes more sense to see identity as provided by the nesting of individuals in groups. In this discussion, I point to therefore, as above, identity as being sought and that belonging is part of the nature of identity. Thus identity, in this discussion, cannot exist until it is conferred. Clearly, we mean much more than this when we speak of identity including ideas like individuation and the encompassing sense of individuality or divisibility from others. Nevertheless, the importance of position and attachment in the creation of identity is central, so that the idea of identity as being a 'conferred identity' will be used as a basic term herein. Thus, in using the term 'identity', unless otherwise stated and with regard to the individual, I mean 'conferred identity'.

Between conferred identity and selfhood there is a continuum of awareness. There are times when one's own self-awareness fades so that what is conferred identity and what selfhood is virtually indistinguishable. Here, though, we reach a point of intersubjectivity that I will take up again in a later chapter (see on page 244).

I use 'persona' to refer to the deliberate, knowing adoption of a role to pursue the purposes of a specific involvement. One adopts a certain 'bearing' to meet with a group in a particular social setting that one would not adopt in a different setting. Clearly, there is a shading amongst persona, selfhood and identity also especially where awareness is reduced by habit or the flow of event such that adopting persona becomes less deliberate and almost automatic in response to given situations. However, for definitional purposes, persona is this more or less deliberate role adoption applied to and bound by specific circumstances.

Identification is an act of aspiring to include something else in one's selfhood or to impose a new meaning or framework upon one's selfhood

or an aspect of it. Identification therefore represents an important but passing, transitional, moment. Identification is 'with' something or someone else, it is the action of choosing something outside to try on the 'inside'. However, identification may be offered, it is not just an active choice since many group memberships are imposed (perhaps most) and that therefore we are identified by the group processes and discourses that claim us.

Given these definitions, selfhood implies, first, a sensation of personal continuity attained and maintained by an individual and, second, an internal pre-attainment state of desire that is maintained over time even though the position desired may not be. This unsatisfied desire becomes a motivation expressed as a position one would desire to occupy.

Selfhood is what is usually meant by the common term, identity, and includes an accepted recognition of oneself as separate and as having a unique accumulation of history, placement, attachments and desires. Particular badges of individuality including name, prominent distinguishing character and associations, reputation, trajectories of desire and physical features sum up selfhood.

Self-Description and Selfhood - Impulse.

Two practical questions arise about common-parlance identity that I will deal with before completely adopting the term, selfhood. The first concerns a practical recognition of the meaning of identity to ourselves. The second is identity with what?

The idea of self-description (or self-definition) aids an understanding of when it is we notice ourselves as having an identity. If life proceeds with security of positional satisfaction and with predictability of pathway, then the idea of having to define what we are may never occur to us. In such a state selfhood is automatic and those things that we may look at to define ourselves; our actions, our bodily being including our emotions and our thoughts (including our thoughts about where we belong) are completely congruent with each other and may even be thought to constitute an identity.

Actions = Thoughts = Body

Jürgen Straub gives this version of 'identity' a sociocultural context:

> *'Identity work' as this psychological activity is sometimes called, is entirely natural for us, however it might be socioculturally constituted; it is a culturally and socially specific*

mode of subjectivity formation, or in other words: it provides the self- and world-relation of persons with a specific structure or form. Identity in each case is always just a provisional result of psychological acts in which thought, emotion and volition are inseparably combined, and which for its part is socially constituted or mediated ...[55]

Yet, however constructed, this idea is also a good description of what we may term 'integrity', a word that carries with it a sense of value. Somebody with integrity is trustworthy, honest and reliable. The word also carries the notion of integration. Socially, this could include a sense of oneself as having an identity of actions, thought and body and includes a moral or valuing congruence. In stasis, this would probably have truth sufficient to the circumstances.

Contrary to what Straub makes out, self-description (or "identity work") occurs when something destabilises one or more of these facets of our sense of self. For example, age produces bodily changes causing redefinition of ourselves and thus we describe ourselves anew. We may no longer be a tennis player and are now a player of golf. Or we have ceased to be a 'tearaway' and are now a responsible family person or indeed we may have become an 'elder'. Unemployment may destabilise us and bring into question what we thought we were; our 'right' as it were to think of ourselves as 'dignified by employment' may be deeply questioned. Alternatively, were our peers to celebrate us and elevate us to a position of honour, our self-description may grow accordingly. In contrast to identification, discussed below, self-description occurs as an *impulse* prompted largely by an event that in some sense is external to ourselves.

Furthermore, the event that has given rise to any moment of self-description will prompt reflection on those newly-described aspects of self and so contribute to selfhood.

To sum up, the conception of identity adopted here takes it that groups confer identity. Further, though choice of group may often be very or completely limited, an individual can actively seek and choose group membership and the identity that such membership can confer. I call this identification.

An individual may consciously or automatically adopt a persona to conform to desired or imposed circumstances. That we can do this with varying

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[55] Op. cit., Straub, Jürgen, "Personal and Collective Identity", p 62.

degrees of consciousness indicates agentiality and the presence of conscious manipulation of belonging.

At moments of crisis or change, individuals will experience the impulse to reflect on the meaning of the occurrence to their sense of 'self'. This action of 'self-description' is an activity that builds, along with multiple belongings and other life sensations within the life environment, a sensation of personal continuity based on body and life trajectory. I refer to this sensation of continuing personal presence as 'selfhood'.

Thus, the common-parlance term, 'identity' implies a multi-factorial band of convictions and sensations about self that ranges from conferment with its connotations of narrowed individual choice and position to selfhood and its connotations of agentiality. This range is necessary if position is the motivation given the requirements of connection and the resulting conditions for resilience.

Finally, position is at once a more subtle yet cruder notion than its denotative reference to physical siting. Position is thought of primarily in relation to ideational rather than physical space. In fact, whichever came first when sentient beings sensed, ideas soon formed the space. Ideas develop in primary attaching relations and are therefore connected to position from the outset. Attachment in family relationships from infancy is suffused with ideational quality. That is, as we experience our position we come to learn how that affects us, how it delimits us and thus what it confers upon us. This knowledge is understood conceptually and we apply it in our relational dealings from infancy, adapting and varying it as we discover more about what we want from position and what we are permitted by it. In this way, our positional motivations are tied up fundamentally with our understandings and beliefs about ourselves. Thus, paradoxically, position is at once a cruder yet more subtle notion in that in these primal ways it is both crudely and inextricably involved in the formation of identity and yet is woven and understood conceptually.

Position and the 'Problem' of Maintaining Identity.

The uncertain nature of what we choose in common parlance to call identity somehow lessens the story, making it difficult to talk of individuals as actors, which is of course the way we understand stories. I am arguing that however much what we term 'identity' is actually determined by what groups confer, the notion of selfhood has utility and validity.

To tell first the story of individuals and their fraught associations with groups allows us to understand this compulsion to act as group laws

dictate. The story of individuality does not exist without an understanding of the story of the compelling nature of groups and the mechanistic behaviour that individuals enact on behalf of groups and their requirements.

Stuart Hall depicts the psychoanalytic construction of 'identity' and shows how this notion gradually ran out of steam. He sees this as having happened when the idea of there being a moment at which identity is formed became increasingly problematic. Identity is problematic if self-recognition can no more be assumed than misrecognition and when discourses can be admitted as sites for identification. When discourses enter the picture, identities cannot be in any sense self-determined.

> *Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.*[56]

Sid Brisbane, an Adelaide actor who worked for most of the case study companies but particularly the Red Shed (and before them Troupe) and the STCSA, points out that an actor adapts to the forms, styles and working methods of each company.[57] Actors' professional technique needs to be transportable from one company to another, from one style to another unless they themselves have limitations, deliberate or otherwise, that cause them to remain within certain boundaries.[58] Sid's and most other professional actors' ability to move from one company to another is similar to the situational selection idea of the Manchester school of anthropologists. To them social interaction occurs across articulated spheres of action and social actors choose the allegiance, values and behaviour styles that are appropriate or compelling at each point of interaction.

Actors, and by extension, all people, place themselves. The nature of the professional part of Sid Brisbane's life environment requires him to make these persona adjustments constantly. These are simply relative to the occupational environment. The task of maintaining that placement, adjusting to its loss or moving beyond it is the task of all people.

In Sid Brisbane's comment, we observe a professional skilled at the process of moving from group to group and fitting in with the requirements of each. Yet, in observing Sid as an actor convincingly playing a variety of

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56 Hall, S, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" in Hall, S. and du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity*. SAGE Publications, 1996, p 6.

57 Fry, Garry, Interview with Sid Brisbane, 15/9/92.

58 Celebrity figures will limit themselves in order to maintain the 'persona' that affords them their position. I have worked with TV 'stars' whose theatre techniques turned out to be limited by little or no training or by insufficient exposure to the different medium.

roles, he, as is true of all actors to varying degrees, carried with him a personal style. One may depict this style as a combination of a myriad of physical, vocal, intellectual, energetic and temperamental events occurring in combination from moment to moment in performance. Importantly, the style, this combination, occurs in tension with the role portrayed. The role urges the actor in its own direction, a direction s/he has painstakingly sought to discover in rehearsal and to which s/he will seek to give substance, and yet the actor or actress continues to possess something recognisably their own. For some this will become highly repetitive, either successfully or unsuccessfully so – and one can recall the great comedians to see highly polished successful examples - while others will work to reduce the recognisable nature of their personal style to enable themselves to adopt a broad mimetic range. Much actor training involves the learning of technique to this purpose. Training often begins with the recognition of personality and its idiosyncratic style with the object of 'calming' it and freeing bodily and vocal movement to take the shapes and sounds of different characters. This is mimetic technique, acting.

Brisbane's comment is reflexively knowing and attests to willingly adopting personas, "points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" to requote the above. Hall explores this point of the externally constructed self through Foucault up to Foucault's own moment of admission that, though subjects may be created through discourse, discursive practice cannot occur without subjects, i.e. individuals who determine and enact.

> *The question which remains is whether we also require to, as it were, close the gap between the two: that is to say, a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylize, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves.*[59]

In the above quote, Hall allows us to see humans as acting and as acted upon, as claiming and as claimed. Though it is essential to understand the claim of discourse in group action, a logic that excludes individual choice leads us to the absurd notion of the group as the final entity always

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[59] Op. cit., Hall, S, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", pp 13-14.

claiming and dispensing law while the individual is reduced simply to the robotic obeyer of custom and practice. Such a view is absurd because it deprives the group of a motor for response and transformation. Ultimately, this view denies the existence of struggling individual minds in the manufacture of a group mind or the essential other in the formation of identity.

> *Every identity has its 'margin', an excess, something more. The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it 'lacks"*[60].

An actor aims to combine awareness of identity, manifested in its idiosyncratic style, of persona, manifested in deliberate adaptations to groups, occupations and the varying circumstances of everyday life and of role, the characters adopted mimetically. Yet these are skills possessed by all to varying degrees and with varying consciousness. We all adopt personas in differing circumstances. We all become aware from time to time of the difficulty of erasing or controlling our own idiosyncrasies where they impede our fluency in groups and in situations where we would like to find acceptance. In these ways, we are aware of the pressure of group requirements on us and aware of our struggles both to conform to them and to maintain our sense of place within them.

Though the struggling of the individual mind is the realm of psychology, a theory that argues the role of interactions within group in the psychology of the individual promises a greater hope for understanding the interface between the actions and identity of the group and the array of positional desires of individual psychologies. Here, resilience theory offers some room to move and I will refer to it in Chapter 5 (see on page 82).

Identification – Deliberation.

Beside identity, identification is a pivotal idea about individual deliberation. Identity does, as noted above inter alia, imply an at least somewhat static state; somehow we or our group or our pet or favourite glass ornament takes on an identity and that is fixed for or by us during the life of the person or thing and does not change until some determined event changes it. Such an event could be a determined life change such as a

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60 Ibid, p 5.

change of name or marital status, the breaking or repainting of an object or the noting that the pet has passed a transition stage; our puppy is now an old dog. On the other hand, identification connotes a point of change or an ongoing decision to adopt or impart identity.

In this sense, identification suggests a number of moments. It is the point where the individual decides on an action that stands in an oblique relation to the group law such as Larry and his speech to the Assembly (see on page 138). Does s/he accept and devote with full commitment, or establish only a partial belonging?

Amidst the many overlapping allegiances, it is the point at which the individual with overt belonging to one group decides to perform an act contradictory to acts that would be perceived to be congruent with the ethos of that group. This would be a moment of identification, of changing identity. A footballer moves from one code to another, Larry decides to speak to the assembly. The company fraud who decides to act against the organisational demand by defrauding the company may be acting according to some other sub-cultural demand. This is a radical example but one that applies to all where overlapping allegiances apply such as, for example, choices regarding family and work or religion and secular ambition. The pressure of choice can lead to acts appearing as if according to a certain group-defined identity; company position in the case of the fraud, but the act is actually one of identification with some other perceived set of mores.

Is the fraudulent act simply greed? Is it merely an individual act that is, according to 'commonsense', a greedy and 'selfish' act? Greed exists in relation to a culture that determines and confers certain benefits of recognition from the attainment and maintenance of distinguishing involvements and possessions. This is a point comprehensively explored by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* where the involvements of those acting within particular social strata are analysed for the symbolic belonging they convey to each other establishing rightful position within the 'habitus' of that strata. The habitus is derived from a complex of judgements as to rightness of action and sign with respect to a particular life-style. Bourdieu exemplifies the "aristocratic asceticism of teachers" and "the pretension of the petite Bourgeoisie"[61] to illustrate the self-defining and other-determining of habitus. Therefore, the desire to embezzle is most likely to be tied up with the desire for recognition within such a desired sub-cultural grouping having a different and favoured life-style requiring greater investment in more expensive badges of distinction. With regard to

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[61] Op. cit., Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p 170.

position, this 'greedy, selfish' act is most likely to be a choice, therefore, of one subgroup over another.

Identification is the active choice; the point at which the individual, experiencing contradictions of belonging & desire, chooses the favoured position, the one offering realisation of the personal fantasy of identity or arising out of the unconscious promptings and conferred identities of the life environment. Identification is an act of deliberation based on positional desire. Thus, identification is the pivot between self-constructed identity, which contains personal fantasies of belonging and inclusion, and acknowledgment of the social requirements that will establish these fantasies of inclusion; requirements often measured as emblems possessed or styles of leisure pursued.

Unlike a situation of stasis in self- or group- construction where position is securely maintained, identification suggests the act of construction, a moment of choice. What surrounds position however is not guaranteed to persist. Consequently, this at times 'static' entity, conferred identity, is dependent on a continual process of individual and group repositioning. Hall's point that some sense of continuing identity can persist within this shifting process is useful in order to understand action. Let's put it this way: there is a desire to grant oneself a sense of selfhood and then to maintain this with an awareness of continuity over time and place. We want to experience harmony between the meaning of our actions in life and their meaning against this 'continuous' selfhood we have worked to form.

Identification is chosen action reflective of our positional desires. There will be times of externally wrought change or crisis that may cause us to make an unwanted identification as the alternative may be a depressing and alienating loss of position. At these times, repositioning calls for amendments to our picture of ourselves that may involve a new identification.

Peter Temple describes with wry humour and fond compassion "the youth club" at the Prince Hotel. The Youth Club is a group of 70+ year old men whose allegiance is to the old Fitzroy Football Club now defunct and translated into the Brisbane Lions thus requiring of the Youth Club a locality and persona uprooting assimilation that is beyond their powers to achieve. Temple's hero, Jack Irish, decides to nudge them to change their allegiance to the St. Kilda Club. They return from a game where the Saints are slaughtered.

> *When we had our beer in front of us, had a sip, wiped off our moustaches, Norm O'Neill, next to me, said quietly, not a register I knew he commanded, 'Well, made up me mind,*

Jack.' He looked to his left, at the others. 'Speakin for me, that's all.'
I didn't say anything. There wasn't any defence to mount for the Saints. This was execution day.
'Yes,' said Norm. 'Reckon I'm stickin with the team. Can't give up on a side that 's so bad. Be inhuman, like leavin a hurt dog in the street.'
Wilbur nodded. ...
... I looked into my beer. It had happened. The graft had taken. The donor hearts hadn't rejected the recipient.[62]

The shifting resources of football-land as the VFL becomes AFL remove the Fitzroy Football Club, a cornerstone of their identity stasis. The 'Roy Boys' are no longer available to provide meaning. Under the duress of this changing world, Wilbur, Norm, and the rest of the "youth club" must tweak at the edges of their identity. They newly identify; choose a new identification, repositioning themselves in order to maintain meaning. That Fitzroy part of the old identity that was made and maintained over a substantial part of their lifetime and flowed from the period when their selfhood congealed, needed renewal to maintain the stasis of identity.

This process of selfhood maintenance persists, then, through repositionings with regard to adjacent groups and individuals. Naturally, these groups and individuals, concerning their own 'difference', need and desire, are themselves repositioning adjacent to yet other groups.

This example of the Youth Club from Peter Temple's book also illustrates the multiple nature of identity. The Youth Club are also a group of companions; customers at their local pub and like all of us occupy a myriad of identity forming positions in life. The Youth Club though represents position as maintenance of identity almost at all costs. The move from the defunct or translated Fitzroy Football Club to the St. Kilda Football Club is at the limit of their tolerance of change – of course part of the humour and of the pathos. Others of course will be actively seeking to reposition as their conception of themselves moves from 'what we are', the natural history of the multiple nature of identity, to

... what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.[63]

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62 Temple, Peter, *Dead Point*. The Text Publishing Co, 2006, p 133.

63 Op cit, Hall, S, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?", p 4.

So our ambition or aspiration is a positioning motivation involving as much what one desires to be (re-expressing Hall's statement above) as what one is (cf. the discussion of the fraudster above).

Moreover, Hall relates this force for transformation that flows from such motivation to the maintenance of stasis:

> *They [identities] relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself ...*[64]

This is a note that will echo in the discussion of legends and their making in a later part of this study.

In the next chapter, I will move from the question of identity to that of alienation, the obverse of position and the denial of identity. I will describe how displacement faces us with the effective and sometimes literal destruction of selfhood. I will aid this discussion with the introduction of two dramatic 'fables of identity', the first of which, *Chelsea*, shows the destruction of selfhood as a result of exclusion.

Understanding of position operates on both the individual and the group level. Further, this operation occurs at a meta-level where ideas interplay with economic and social constraints as much as it does at a micro level of individual adjustment and maladjustment. The story of *Chelsea* (see on page 79), reflects a culture that persists from school to school from generation to generation. At the time that this project and another project recounted in the next part (see *The Story of Larry and Ben* on page 138) the group to which these young people belonged were generically known as and titled by young people: 'the popular group'. Concerned with looks, hierarchy, at least ambivalent and often contemptuous attitudes to scholastic commitment, amongst males physical endowment and amongst females sexual piquancy, rejection of and revulsion towards those without 'fashionable' instincts; all these and other aspects of the popular group's ideology produce a clearly demarcated stylistic face to the school and adult world.

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64 Ibid.

Chapter 5. Alienation: the Obverse of Position.

Let us return to Jo from Dickens' *Bleak House* who "stands huddled together in a bundle looking all about the floor" ...

> *He seems to know that they have an inclination to shrink from him ... He, too, shrinks from them. He is not of the same order of things, not of the same place in creation. He is of no order and no place - neither of the beasts, nor of humanity.*[65]

Jo is the image of utter exclusion and the want of belonging. This is the obverse of position. Alienation is a powerful anxiety. As our attachments confer identity and grant us the memberships through which we build our continuing sense of self, so the absence of these attachments, the inability to form them or the actual exclusion from them has self-destabilising potential. In this chapter, I will focus on alienation and its contribution to the positional need.

Amongst the costs of exclusion for any attempt to occupy a niche is an encounter with the experience of alienation. This cost gives special piquancy to the need to belong. Avoidance of alienation as a state of being is a driver to maintain and improve position. It is to this prospect, alienation as the obverse of position and the destabilisation of self to which I now turn.

I begin this discussion of alienation with a review of the meaning of alienation and a discussion of from what it is that one is alienated. I will then use an identity fable, *Chelsea*, to underline the power of exclusion as a group strategy, the personally destabilising effect of alienation and the moral tension that arises out of group behaviour.

To understand the unrelenting balance of tensions involved in individual and group processes both to attain and maintain position and to avoid exclusion, I will then consider the factors that underlie resilience since alienation and the absence of personal resilience are related. Through understanding resilience factors as primarily social in their construction, we can appreciate their strong relationship to group processes.

Finally, the chapter reviews an aspect of the work of Northrop Frye regarding the nature of romance. Frye regards romance as a 'secular scripture'. By 'romance' Frye refers to a body of work that stands in contradistinction to the mythic or, in other words, the central belief systems of a society or in the positional terms of this thesis, the ideologies of claim

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65 Op. cit., Dickens, C. *Bleak House,* p 676.

made by the hegemonic idea-rulers of a society. The romantic refers to the 'fabulous' that stand outside of and beyond this. His study of romance reveals this genre as a quest and in particular as a quest for an integrated non-alienated world.

Alienation.

Marxist theory invokes alienation as a state of individuals and classes in relation to the product of their labour, a product that with the industrial appropriation of the means of production became increasingly removed as an artefact issuing from the hands of the artisan to one brought forth by capital according to the laws of the market. The effect of capitalism and the market extends then beyond the relation of the worker to his/her product and into the self and all other relations. This state is largely unknown to the worker as consciousness is the subject of the hegemony of the dominant ideas, those of the ruling class. Class itself is seen as coming into consciousness only with opposition to dominance. Before that, it is only an economic relation while the competition between workers for diminishing wages represents disunion within class. The potential action of class is constituted according to economic power coming into existence politically when consciousness of the alienated condition becomes a source of unity in opposition.

The realisation of alienation as a disabling state of being is a fundamental understanding whether or not the various 'proletarian' revolutions or the successes of union movements during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflect the unity of class in opposition that Marx foresaw. Moreover, the subsumption of this understanding by hegemonies of thought that disguise this effect, compounds the disabling effect of alienation. For Marx unconsciousness of an exploited state of being permits an economic structure so to determine the exploitative relations of production that internecine competition between individuals and groups is the norm.

A major point I am making in this thesis is that position is better understood as related to expressive space rather than geographic or economic space. Position exists in expressive space first, a recognition of being and belonging. Thus, our reception of geography is interpreted and reprojected through the ideas by which we define our groups and us and, likewise, our economic actions are directed towards securing the expression of these definitions. Therefore, positioning should not be reduced to economic terms and thus alienation should not be understood only as a condition of exploitation. To do so would be to ignore its micro

workings, the latent competition, amongst people within groups or of like occupation and between groups that may have almost identical features but which, and to the point of desperation, contend with one another. Their very likeness pronounces that they contend for the same space and will do so to obliteration unless they are able to find alliances of co-existence supported ideologically and reinforced by ritual.

Later, in considering the significance of resilience studies, we will observe how alienation operates at this micro level as well. Most factors required for resilience indicate responsive group operation. Maintenance of position by individuals and groups requires those resilient factors. Conversely, without these, position is less successfully maintained and the sensation and even the reality of alienation becomes likely. A reinforcing feedback loop sets up where the greater the relative absence of factors protective of individual and group resilience, then the more tenuous the occupation of position.

From what is one alienated? What does it mean to be without 'position'? The answer to these questions lies in the relativities of desire and the relative harmony of position occupied. These relativities and harmonies equally apply to the group. If a group desires to be recognised at a particular level of operation and it is not, the sense of alienation will depend upon the extent to which it can operate in the position it does have as opposed to the position it wants. The same applies to individuals. If the group cannot operate then it will cease to exist and its individuals will attend to their partial loss of identity that was afforded by that membership in some other way: a different membership of similar purpose, a changed allegiance or state of relative inconsolability where the loss of recognition may be thought of as alienation. This latter state suggests the loss of harmony between the position actually occupied and selfhood (cf: see *The Story of Larry and Ben*, on page 138).

Let us consider the dispossession from position that has produced these varying responses from accommodation and changed allegiance to disconsolation. Alienating possessors of position from that position has been a strategy. I refer to 'that' position rather than 'their' position. Part of the difficulty in these situations is the feeling of ownership. Part of the thrust here is the acknowledgement that positions come into existence as niches in the space of possible ideas that groups and individuals attempt to claim as expressive space. Ownership is a claim. As a claim it is as commonsensical as excellence in theatre (see discussion on page 126) and any other ideology that is so deeply and culturally accepted that it has moved beyond question. This deep status of ownership makes the strategy of alienating very effective. For ...

... without position, selfhood is unstable since it lacks the 'belonging' experience of conferred identity necessary to the secure, continuous building of selfhood. Moreover, the less identity one feels is conferred the less one feels able rightfully to belong in a group, belonging being, *ipso facto,* position. Exclusion is a classic strategy since it has this emotional result. The disposition of alienation is a feeling of non-position, marginality and inauthenticity. It is a de-legitimation of identity and an attack on selfhood.

Or as in Chelsea's case, the suicidal protagonist in the identity fable now to be discussed, our experience of exclusion may render our self-description such that we lose all sense of 'right' or belonging. Her experience of alienation is so acute that removing herself from the world of being and belonging may seem the only position allowed. In a sense, this is also Jo's conclusion as he moves along to the "berryin' ground".

Chelsea – An Identity Fable.

Chelsea[66] is a dramatic tale about alienation developed with young people and focussed on the interactions between individuals and a school 'popular group'. Their play was a deliberate project to allow the group to reflect on themes that concerned them. Their themes were exclusion and alienation, friendship and group loyalty. An aspect of the play, as you will see, is a second ending. The first is a tragic ending in suicide and for the story they were telling, the group of young people acknowledged this ending's dramatic appeal and its reality as a metaphor for a response to exclusion they understood. Yet as the tragedy reflected on their own lives in varying and unpleasant ways, they sought another response to exclusion. Their second ending provided an alternative response. In performance, they decided to present both endings.

Chelsea told the story of a girl who, ostracised by her peers and especially from her best friend, Lennie, seeks solace in an imaginary friend she calls Ferb[67]. Her parents are disturbed by this 'madness' but cannot agree on how to deal with it. Family arguments ensue. Chelsea's response to the pressures of family and the ultimate exclusion by the popular group is suicide. The play arose from the thematic concerns of the group: ostracism, isolation and friendship. They could see that Chelsea's suicidal choice could make sense for someone like her. However, her choice

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66 Fry, Garry. *Chelsea.* A replay, group devised drama project developed for the Messengers Program of the Arts Centre, 2003.

67 The actress talked to her hand, which talked back to her, to depict Ferb.

raised for them a moral question about the nature of friendship that could lead to such a choice. They were anxious to consider this question through their play.

Chelsea consciously focussed on exclusion as a group-defining technique and on alienation as an afflicted social condition. The process actively sought to confront and deal with the circumstances of what these young people considered a social malady. For the moment, let their work stand for the dark world of identity deprivation, a state of lowered resilience and risk. In this state, there can be a paralysis of socially effective action and so the ability to withstand stress, to endure it, is consequently undermined. Depression and anxiety ensue. Chelsea, the character, reflects this. The play depicts both the traumatic environment and the disturbed pattern of behaviour set up in response to it. It then sets out to manage these effects.

There is to be a party to which Lennie is invited and pointedly Chelsea is not. The 'popular group' in the playground, the fashionable party-going elite of the teenage environment at her school encourage Lennie, her friend, to join them. To Lennie this is a major mark of approval and acceptance, highly prized and difficult to relinquish at any price. Chelsea confronts the 'popular group'; "what is so different about me from my friend, Lennie, that you shouldn't invite me. You should invite me." Nevertheless, Chelsea's request is rejected. Lennie is unable to find the strength to support her.

The girl playing the part of Chelsea, gave her the response of creating Ferb, when the popular group' rejected Chelsea. To depict the imaginary friend the actress talked to her hand, which talked back to her, an effective comic device that also kept the friend visibly with her as a kind of ventriloquist's dummy intertwined with the fate of the character. The rest of the group accepted her decision and added the recitation of a poem written by one of them about suicide. The poem stood as a sidelight to the pain of alienation they could depict with Chelsea. The poem seemed to enable the romanticising of self-destruction since the romanticising of such thoughts can enable escape from distress.

What has happened here? Preoccupations of individuals arising from their experiences of group interactions and from their responses to these experiences have been incorporated into a shared perspective. This is a normalising experience where the result is group formation. This process has occurred at a place removed from the site of the experience and within an enabling 'authority'. As we will see later when considering ritual, this has been an activity 'at a threshold', providing an interpretive opportunity and occurring within a group experiencing, as Turner terms it,

'communitas' (a working harmony within a felt commonness of purpose and a deep experience of shared insight and belonging.). The participants utilised their shared perspective in the dramatic task of figuring out the themes of Chelsea.

Lennie becomes part of the 'popular group'. The group plans a party under the bridge. It'll be a rage! Chelsea tells Ferb that she is going. Ferb (her hand) advises against this course of action. In response, Chelsea argues that since Lennie is her friend and Lennie is part of the 'popular group' then she must be popular too. Ferb despairs of her unhinged logic! Off she goes to the inevitable rejection which happens and Chelsea responds by casting herself off the bridge to her death. (But not before Ferb 'freaks out' that Chelsea will be casting her to h death also!)

Chelsea's pain and self-destruction are willingly depicted – a group effusion of a commonly understood, and, known, experience of exclusion and sensation of alienation. Yet, the group struggled with the ending they had made. Given their experience, they knew that the ending was plausible. They also knew that they did not like its apparent inevitability. Nor did they like what this said about themselves as moral beings. Somehow accepting the inevitability of Chelsea's suicide meant that they were conniving in moral dissolution. They saw that by letting Lennie carry through her 'betrayal' of Chelsea to her friend's destruction, they had allowed their symbol of peer corruption, the 'popular group', to remain dominating and dominant to the end; symbolically, forever. With this ending there could not be a 'happily ever after' of the romantic vision (of which more shortly). Even if they decided to retain the tragedy, they knew they would be left with an image of an unreformed world.

They devised a second ending determining that a 'narrator' should come forward after Chelsea's death leap and state that "there is a another ending to this play". In the second ending Lennie, seeing Chelsea go up to the bridge and suspecting her intention, leaves the 'popular group' and attempts to talk Chelsea out of her action. She succeeds by admitting she was wrong to leave Chelsea and that Chelsea could rely upon her (Lennie's) friendship.

For this group, putting together the story of Chelsea was an exercise containing moral problem solving, a debate between reality and justice, a confrontation between bearing emotional pain and sentimentalised suicide and understanding the paradox of belonging and isolation, that is, balancing group norms and selfhood. Beyond this, they were highly aware of the message they were contributing to their surrounding life

environment. For them, a world where 'the popular group' can continue to dominate could not be presented as inevitable.

The young people devising and performing this work had been selected based on a willingness to use their knowledge of what it is to experience troubles to build a work of drama that might communicate some of their insights to others. Their troubles were often sited in the school environment where they lacked sufficient resilience to withstand the torments of that environment. Their play captured this depicting in Chelsea's problem Dickens's Jo's of not belonging anywhere. Resilience is a crucial idea and illuminates the next step in our understanding of the sociological mechanisms that flow from the positional imperative.

Position, Resilience and Group Membership.

Adopting the idea of resilience to speak of a quality necessary to survival has a sociological import despite its psychological resonances. It can be used to speak of individuals' or groups' ability to endure and can point to the success of an individual in gaining and maintaining social position. It is in this sense that a consideration of what constitutes resilience is illuminating for a study of the positioning of individuals and, ultimately, groups.

A seminal text in the discussion of resilience is that of Werner and Smith and their longitudinal study of young people from 'at risk' backgrounds on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.[68] In particular, they noted those who not only survived but entered adult life positively and effectively. Their observations noted resiliencies in a cumulative developmental light and their work and others noted that resilient young people benefited from 'protective factors'. Resilience studies since then have increasingly noted the importance of protective factors as an interaction between the child and their environment . The following comment from a recent work on resilience indicates this line of thought:

> *As research in the area of resilience has developed over time, the conceptualization of resilience has been refined, such that most researchers now recognize it as a dynamic process that results from ongoing transactions between a child and the*

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[68] Werner, Emmy and Smith, Ruth S., *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood.* Cornell University Press, 1992.

environment, rather than an internal characteristic of the child ...[69]

Flowing from Werner and Smith's study and the resilience work since, typified by the above statement, what qualities or 'resiliencies' should we expect to find within the adult individual that allow a 'resilient' disposition towards belonging in the surrounding social environment? Stephen and Sybil Wolin have outlined seven resiliencies (insights, relationships, creativity, morality, independence, initiative, and humour).[70] These can be characterised as an understanding of the connections between things, what we might call insight, independence along with creativity, initiative and a sense of aspiration alongside the ability to form relationships and a moral outlook balanced by humour and the ability to find relaxation.

Several of these are problematic in that they involve qualities that must be kept in abeyance if one is to form certain kinds of social bonds. Given a high rigidity of group behaviour characterised by observance of, and an unquestioning attitude to, the unspoken laws of bonding adopted through group practice, independence for example may well work against such group singularity, as may initiative.

Clearly not all groups possess such an extreme rigidity that independence and initiative cannot be prized qualities in its membership. Yet group operation will always require the sensitive and unspoken channelling of these. This effectively means that resilience does not exist with these qualities in a kind of basket. They must interact and they must contain the unspoken ability to observe and read the boundaries and taboos of group behaviour. Therefore, the ability to form relationships contains this unspoken aspect. The sense of aspiration must have with it alertness to where one's aspiration will offend or threaten and, if it does either, the ability to defend, attack, displace or otherwise avert offensive action will be a requirement. Thus, in general it is unlikely for there to be successful aspiration without insight, useful initiative without relationships and only a narrow morality without humour. In each of these cases, exceptions would provide a study in the greater strength of some other countervailing quality or power.

What might be present in a social environment to support and encourage the operation of these within the individual? That is, what protective

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69 Vanderbilt-Adriance, Ella and Shaw, Daniel S., "Conceptualizing and Re-Evaluating Resilience Across Levels of Risk, Time, and Domains of Competence" in *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, Volume 11, Numbers 1-2 / June, 2008, p 1.

70 Wolin, Steven, and Wolin, Sybil, The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity. Villard, 1993, passim.

factors surround the individual? Again, for argument's sake, they could include those in which the individual may participate or be involved, i.e.: connection and belonging, that provide available bonds to others along with care and support, that enable the learning of life and social skills within an environment where high positive expectations are communicated and where clear boundaries are established and maintained.

The problematic nature of resilience is brought to the fore in this array of protective factors since the potential for contradiction is contained within them. What, for example, is the independent activity that is permissible within the social necessity of clear boundaries to behaviour? The negotiation of these tensions is the learning task of the individual. The task of the individual exists within the group's need to maintain itself within the broader social milieu. Moreover, the group need exists, ostensibly, in order to maintain the goals of the individuals who belong to it.

Before this discussion of resilience, I have stated as a premise of this thesis that the positioning motivation and then actions of individuals also work at the levels of groups and in fact meta-identities. What resilience studies tell us is that despite this, resiliencies in the individual and protective factors in groups are complementary and in tension. Confidence in the individual requires support from the group while confidence out of keeping with group ideologies of, for example, 'seemly presentation' provides a tension in action for the individual. These tensions and complementarities tune the actions that maintain position through ideological claim and stylistic presentation. They also produce discordancies of fit and purpose placing tension on the definitions of both individuals and groups leading to affliction, social drama and transformation or redress.

Let us return to the resiliencies that we posit as included in the overall resilience of the individual. In the absence of these, what might we expect to find? Such individual 'lacks' would be suggested by a series of perhaps unexceptional but persistent negative affects that have become maladaptive. These would include tension and anxiety, dependence, isolation, task avoidance or helplessness, sad or even morbid preoccupations and a poor sense of selfhood and/or belonging.

The above affects may well be construed as factors symptomatic of an alienated state. The point is that resilience is about surviving and succeeding in social circumstances. It refers to qualities individuals have that enable social success and at the same time refers to qualities groups must possess to enable success in its individual members.

Resilience is built on social reciprocation and 'good enough' success in competition. Alienation occurs where the individual cannot manage the

stylistic requirements of group membership, is excluded from reciprocation or considers him or herself to have experienced persistent failure. It occurs in and around every group, every class organisation and throughout every encompassing agglomeration of groups and meta-identities such as industries and nations.

Resilient groups and individuals apply their resilient qualities in the adoption and manipulation of style, in the understanding and pursuit of ideological connections and the maintenance of these to ensure legitimation of their positions. The actions amongst, say, groups of schoolchildren and those amongst, say, groups of theatre companies will operate on these principles.

The converse of this observation is that vulnerable and alienated people can affect their group and undermine the group's resilience. In noting this, we must be aware that vulnerability is not necessarily synonymous with weakness or fragility. Rigidity can be vulnerable as can the wielding of blind power. As we will see later in the work of Victor Turner (see on page 182), the affliction of one member of a group can cause the entire group to turn back on itself having to deal with the affliction of the individual in order to function as a group.

A paradox I am presenting in this thesis is that theatre can be, especially in Victor Turner's terms, a redressive mechanism of modern society deployed to deal with our own afflictions. What I conclude is that this is simply a more obvious reflective function of society and that redressive action is interlaced within all group activity and is a part of group resilience. *Chelsea* demonstrates theatre acting in this redressive manner and I will return to that discussion in Chapter Ten, "Theatre as Ritual".

The Romantic Tale of Alienation.

In another sense, *Chelsea* is a 'secular scripture'. For Northrop Frye romance is a secular scripture, the obverse of official myth/religion as alienation is the obverse of position. The structure of romance travels through alienation and towards an ideal position that is a metaphor of an integrated identity. The *Chelsea* group aware, as we have seen, that their ending was not the romantic ending of integration gave both endings, one that for them was the reality and the other a scripture of moral integration.

A task of drama is to perform the secular scripture.

> *The characterization of romance is really a feature of its mental landscape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, one above the level*

of ordinary experience, the other below it. There is, first, a world associated with happiness, security, and peace ... the idyllic world. The other is the world of exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more pain ... the demonic or night world.[71]

Northrop Frye introduces the idea of alienation as that vicarious experience of romance between "once upon a time" and "they lived happily ever after".

What happens in between are adventures, or collisions with external circumstances, and the return to identity is the release from the tyranny of these circumstances. Illusion for romance, then, is an order of existence that is best called alienation [72]

Frye's notion of alienation as the dwelling point of romance can lead us into an essential understanding of the social function of drama. His distinction between reality and illusion in romance concerns the idea of identity because we see our 'true' selves as distinct from the buffeted self of everyday life. We see our reality as what we should be or could be if we were given the opportunity to follow, and then successfully achieve, our aspirations. This 'ideal' self is our reality in the same way that the 'illusion' forced on us by the contingencies of existence is not. Thus, the 'reality' of romance is the ideal state before and after the romance itself. The romantic adventure is the world where identity is illusory since it is under attack. The romantic existence occurs in a night world, during a descent into a kind of hell of the personality where the heroin's virginity/integrity is under attack and likewise the hero's integrity/honour. For both, the stakes are death or dishonour. And dishonour, it seems, threatens to dissolve at least the self, and perhaps even the soul.[73]

Deep within the stock convention of virgin-baiting is a vision of human integrity imprisoned in a world it is in but not of, often forced by weakness into all kinds of ruses and stratagems, yet

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71 Frye, Northrop, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Harvard University Press, 1976, p 53.

72 Ibid., p 54.

73 Self and soul are perhaps names accorded the same entity; one by a secular outlook and the other a spiritual.

> *always managing to avoid the one fate which really is worse than death, the annihilation of one's identity.*[74]

He then evokes a profound statement of enduring identity: "I am Duchess of Malfi still".[75] Despite the assaults on self and soul, the Duchess endures to embrace her inner identity, her conviction of self. Romance is a fable of human identity and integrity. In this sense, it is a scripture, mythic in proportion and social significance and as drama, it is a ritual.

> *The ritual is, so to speak, the epiphany of the myth, the manifestation or showing forth of it in action. ... This is clearest in drama, where the presentation of the play is itself ritualistic.*[76]

Invoking Aristotle, Frye divides human action into practical and symbolic action using the idea of ritual to encapsulate the latter. Analogically, ritual is related to romance in that each share a mixture of reality and illusion, wakefulness and dreaming.

> *Similarly, ritual is a conscious waking act, but there is always something sleepwalking about it: something consciously being done, and something else unconsciously meant by what is being done.*[77]

In providing an understanding of the role of romance, Frye also explains an underlying purpose for drama. Though liminoid in Turner's sense (that is, no longer central to the workings of a social psyche) it is a social opportunity to ritualise the drama of integrity and identity. The reality beyond struggle, the identity known and seldom integrated in daily activity, is then, the ever-unstated object of the ritualistic in drama.

By terming romance "the secular scripture", Frye sets romance against myth, the accumulating body of stories that encapsulates and communicates the spiritual versions of social beliefs that construct and legitimate the ruling worldview. The latter are the sort of scriptures upon which Dante and Milton base their great works while the secular scripture exists in folktales and lore surfacing in literature constantly as in Shakespeare's romances or in Spenser or Scott and so on. Both

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74 Ibid., p 86.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., p 55.
77 Ibid.

scriptures cohabit in our daily life pervading our worldview and, via the tension of their often-competing motivations, shaping our actions.

Thus, the ideas of dramatic activity, liminoid purpose and ritual and romance as a story-making key are linked with the notion of alienation. Sorting out the social and psychological problems of human interactions is linked to the revisiting of old stories and universal themes in, say, classic revivals and to the ritualistic debate of contemporary human situations and relationships in new works. Frye's secular scripture, romance, the drama of our separation from self and our loss of the fruitful connections that form identity, is the story that is the subject of our expression and our occupation when we make theatre.

Our project in theatre is to lead our species away from an alienated state or the danger of it. We enact our project by telling the story of alienation repeatedly. We apply the theatrical kaleidoscope to it over and over again, twisting it this way and that searching to enable meaning to arise for an audience out of each new configuration of the bits of coloured glass that together constitute the strange moments and fixations of each new retelling of this fundamental story.

In the next part, I will expand this consideration of position from the nexus of the individual and the group to the positioning of groups themselves. I begin with a sketch of the configuration of professional adult theatre companies in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties. An explanation is presented of the mechanisms from ideological claim to position to the stylistic sustaining of such claims that interlock as necessary aspects of group behaviour. The part provides a description of the structure and operation of groups and places them within the construction and operation of the space of possible ideas.

In presenting the second of the two fables of identity, *The Story of Larry and Ben*, the part also presents how the tensions of group behaviour and position lead to the requirement of redress and introduces here the idea of the social drama that will figure prominently in the following part.

PART 3.

GROUPS, CLAIMS AND CONFIGURATIONS.

> *... one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless "culture", in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back into "culture" in the anthropological sense...* [78]

Bourdieu's stricture heading this Part expresses something of the motivation behind this sketch I wish to offer of the arrangement of theatrical endeavour in Adelaide. Bourdieu urges us to look behind the culture we live amidst and understand its motivation and shape, how it is *of* us and *through* us reflecting our foibles and our deepest desires to belong and to distinguish ourselves from others. To look at culture in this way causes us to understand deeper tensions in social formations. These tensions reflect our contention for expressive survival and they lead to transformation, despite ourselves, through our positioning actions.

To this point, we have considered individuals and their identity formation. We have seen how agentiality is as much a factor as conferment, forming as I will describe it later in this part, an indissoluble circle. We have also seen how the interwoven resilience factors that determine survival rely on a continual balancing of tensions for both individuals and groups. Moreover, what of resilience groups and individuals provide is complementary, underlining the essential interdependency of each.

Contingency therefore becomes a highly significant factor in social patterning. The manner in which groups and individuals place themselves in relation to each other is a specific outcome of the nature of identity and its formation. In this part, I will introduce the first part of the case study exemplifying many of the mechanisms I describe as interlocked. This part of the case study observes the configuration of groups, in this case professional theatre companies in a specific geo-polity. What connects them is geo-political contingency, Adelaide, at a specific time, the first half of the 1990s.

In the first chapter, Chapter Six, transformation within the field can be seen in relation to the pressures in theatrical activity between stasis and contention. The effort by government and others to see the configuration in Adelaide theatre described in Chapter Six as well justified and worth preserving, is apparent yet the seeds of change are already visible.

A basic premise of this study of configuration is that for survival companies find markets and/or patronage according to cultural affiliations. These affiliations determine a focus of purpose and content that produces a style. In turn, the style itself becomes a mark of legitimacy displayed to cultural

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[78] Op. cit., Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p1.

affiliates or supporters whether they are theatregoers, policy-makers and interpreters or patrons. This circle of dependence, which relates the materiality of survival to the intangibility of style, is fundamental to an understanding of how aesthetic decisions are crucially located socially and culturally.

Ostensibly, those decisions in theatre to do with administration, marketing, casting, programming, governing and so on are all there to enable, support and protect the decisions desired in rehearsal. The reality, however, is that these aspects of the theatrical endeavour support the position of the company first and foremost and are sensitive to the cultural pressures with which they come into contact. Decisions made in such an environment are not necessarily supportive of theatrical decisions and could impinge upon the aesthetic endeavour. That they seldom impinge upon the aesthetic endeavour implies that the aesthetic endeavour itself is attuned to the nature of its patronage and operates, for the most part, to satisfy this reality.

The surrounding culture filters into this activity in many ways and the supporting administrative and promotional activities of theatre are not least amongst these but form an important conduit for the theatrical desires of the surrounding culture. What is 'aesthetic' in this context becomes profoundly problematic and begs a more distinctive mode of discussion, explanation and analysis. That aesthetic decisions are embedded in social activity holds a more important significance for artistic interpretation than simply the scholarly explication of 'meaning' or the 'purity' of performance.

After beginning with a presentation of the configuration of theatre that appeared in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties, this Part then studies theatrical activity as social rather than aesthetic. In Chapter Seven, I follow up the implications of the legitimating statements and actions, couched in their distinctive styles, noted in Chapter Six and consider the role of legitimation in relation to the maintenance and attainment of position. Tests of legitimacy are answered with an effort to make the practice 'agree' with the rhetoric. Even so, the establishment of underlying legitimating ideologies and the sustaining of these by a resonant style make primary contributions to the work of theatre.

The third chapter of the part returns to the level of the group and the tensions for individuals operating within them. To do this, I use the second of the two identity fables, *The Story of Larry and Ben*, to illustrate the operation of tacit group rules in its governing culture, the simple structure of groups and the individual desire to form identification beyond it.

What groups offer us is opportunity for expression of the various aspects of our selfhood and identification desires. Groups are the vehicle for establishing the space for this expression. We each work to establish ourselves within this space and with the set of ideas the group represents. We jostle within our group for expression and we contribute to the jostling of the group for the space for us to use. Always our jostling and our expression interfaces with others and other groups via the varying panoply of style containing the marks and meanings of justifying ideologies.

In this part, I will introduce some more determinants of this jostling nature. I sketch the phenomenon of adjacent groups defining themselves in contradistinction to each other and in relation to dominant groups. In describing this aspect of group definition, I will also define and properly introduce the notion of the space of possible ideas (see Chapter Eight), the construction of which I will apply more fully in a subsequent chapter (see Chapter Twelve). Expression occurs in this ideational space. The interaction between the individual and the group, that so resists disentanglement, occurs at this site.

Meta-Identity and Consistency of Positional Action.

In this part, I will extensively employ the term 'meta-identity'. Similar to the notion of 'field', meta-identity refers to an inclusive though more abstracted aspect of fields. Thus, over and above the similar activity that defines a field, meta-identity includes the institutional or purposive overlay such as 'education' overlaying 'school' or 'theatre' overlaying 'theatre practice'. While defining major facets of overall identity, this aspect may not seem strictly relevant to the daily activity of those within a field. Thus actors in a rehearsal, promotions officers and graphic designers working on a marketing campaign and groups defining their relationships on a school playground are less aware of their belonging to larger entities such as school or theatre practice, their geo-polity or their nation than they are of their present involvement.

A premise adopted about positioning in this Part and into the thesis as a whole is that at each level of the hierarchy of groups the same elements of action occur; there is a consistency of positional action. By using the operation of playground groups in a school, I will draw out similarities of operation, hierarchy and dependency in the formation of group identity with the field of professional theatre companies. In looking at a slice of the contending groups within professional theatre this thesis also takes into account that together they form part of the meta-identity, theatre, that is in contact with other fields such as government arts departments, sponsors and distinguishing activities such as theatre-going.

Chapter 6. A Configuration of Theatre.

What I intend to sketch in this chapter is an outline of one significant 'slice' of the theatrical scene as it appeared in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties. My primary focus is the funded, professional adult drama companies targeting adult audiences with a significant proportion of their work. The latter qualification is important in that some of these companies had a major aspiration to perform to adult audiences while performing even the majority of their work to school's audiences. This results from a combination of factors reflecting cultural, educational or moral policy, desire and financial necessity.

In the course of this sketch, I will present some factors that I believe can contribute to an understanding of this configuration. These factors are drawn from conversations and interviews with practitioners, government officers and committee people. I contend that such factors are useful in a consideration of theatrical configuration in any city or region. I will also present brief overviews of the cultural aspirations of the city as reflected in its cultural activity and of the amateur theatrical legacy preceding the configuration we see here.

In considering configuration, I do not wish to reify it into a single factor affecting stage activity. Rather it is one extra-aesthetic factor that has the potential to affect aesthetic decisions significantly. However, configuration reflects factors happening at the level of the social and institutional activities of theatre. I propose throughout this thesis that these factors are interconnected. Some of these interconnections I already have and will further flesh out in order to describe an interlocking of mechanisms in operation.

Adelaide and SA: A Cultural Thumbnail Sketch.

The constellation of theatre activity provides one way of understanding the cultural matrix that both forms and constrains theatrical activity. The following discussion is based on the theatrical constellation as it presented itself in Adelaide in the years 1992-3 having established itself during the preceding 5 or 6 years and as persisted to around the mid-nineties. On the following page is a simplified representation of that configuration.

Later in this work, I will discuss The Australian Playhouse, The STCSA as it was for a time under the Executive Producership of Chris Westwood. The Australian Playhouse occurred towards the end of this period and exemplified some of the points I make in this study including amongst them the allusion to legend for legitimacy and the power of the hegemonic

ideas. It is interesting and sad for this author to note that an important part of the constellation at this time, The Red Shed, was gone by the late nineties and this in itself demonstrates transformation in the space of possible ideas.

The historical backdrop to this configuration is a later topic of this discussion and I will use it to form part of an explanation of the phenomenon of configuration I am about to describe. To begin, the following table presents a description of the constellation as it was during this period.

Funded	Unfunded
The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust. The Adelaide Festival of the Arts	Festival Fringe (the Fringe itself was funded but most of the Fringe performances were self-funded)
State Theatre Company of South Australia Touring companies	Amateur Companies
Small Companies Junction Vitalstatistix Doppio Teatro The Red Shed	Commercial Theatre
Theatre for and by Young People including some that for the most part supported themselves but were sometimes in receipt of funds for projects.	Theatre for and by Young People
Fringe Companies and Projects including some that for the most part supported themselves but were sometimes in receipt of funds for projects.	Fringe Companies and Projects

Figure 2 Adelaide Theatre: a simplified structure of the constellation in the first half of the nineties.

Adelaide, a city of a somewhat over a million people, but the cultural centre of a sparsely populated state has a unique sense of itself as a state of free settlers untarred with the convict brush. Against this identity is also the background sense of rural disappointment tempered by successes which themselves exist under the question of environmental depletion. The grand rural ambitions of the nineteenth century gave way to the reality of being the driest state in an arid continent. This reality ensured that the northward plans of a spirited population ended literally in the stone ruins which dot the countryside and emphasise a background of hardship.

Nevertheless, the patrician meritocracy of Adelaide prospered on the successes of the less marginal lands and the mines and found in art as in architecture a fitting vessel for its identity and pride. The city became the 'Athens of the South', with an aspiration to nurture the new and artistically vibrant.

By 1992, this picture was waning in the face of the collapse of the State Bank of South Australia in 1991 shortly after bringing with it the fall of the premier, John Bannon, and soon after the demise of the Labour Government. Both had continued the fulsome support of the arts generously endowed by the previous and legendary labour premier, Don Dunstan. Furthermore, the success of Eastern seaboard festivals threatened the primacy of Adelaide's biennial Festival of the Arts. An indefinable but felt sense of a stylistic edge that the city seemed to have had, was weakening.

Omissions from the Picture.

Even so, in this year the constellation of theatrical activity in Adelaide was complex and still large in Australian terms. In order to discuss the idea of configuration using the Adelaide example I have chosen to reduce the complexity by extracting one slice of that activity, namely, the professional companies playing largely to adult audiences. This slice is chosen because it is the pinnacle of aspiration for most theatre professionals. However, a brief listing of the major aspects that this omits is important.

Professionally this slice omits the permanent companies concentrating on theatre for or by youth of which this included three funded: Patch Theatre, Unley Youth Theatre and Carousel, and several other viably professional such as Paperbag Theatre and a then new Theatre-in-Education company set up by actor and writer, Tony Mack.

Permanent companies that operated in the country are also omitted. At the time, this included one only, Mainstreet, that operated in the South

East Region of the state. The dismantling and then subsuming in the early nineties of Harvest, which operated throughout the regional areas with mainstage theatre productions, into the Regional Cultural Council (responsible for regional touring and arts activities) had left a vacuum which was increasingly, and by public policy, filled by productions toured by the city based companies.

Outside the permanent companies, there are two other significant areas of omission. First, the amateur companies that have had a historically important role in Adelaide theatre and still commanded a market following in the central district of Adelaide greater than the equivalent districts in Sydney or Melbourne. The long lasting Genesians Theatre in Sydney was the only (in terms of 'professional' standard) significant amateur company in these cities but did not have the significance of either the Therry Dramatic Society in Adelaide nor the Adelaide Repertory Theatre in terms of regular central patronage. La Mama in Adelaide had some significance but did not share the professional role or centrality of purpose of its namesake in Melbourne. Further, as professionalism became the entrenched leading mode of theatre enterprise the significance of these companies was effectively eclipsed. The amateur background, though, has importance for this field and I will return to it shortly.

Second, some companies with a sporadic existence were able to survive with special project funding. In the case of Big Ensemble, there was clearly an argument for professionally funded status. Thus, the company had a peripheral significance within the constellation added to by the fact that the Artistic Director of Big Ensemble, Kim Hanna, was also the Artistic Director of Unley Youth Theatre in the period under consideration and had several commissions as Director with the STCSA. The list does not end with Big Ensemble. There were others and additionally the existence and continued viability of Theatre 62, a home for many of these projects and project companies attested to the significance of this activity within the profile of professional adult theatre in Adelaide.

All the above are significant contenders in this field. Yet each occupied areas in the field that were different enough to be sidelined from the main professional competition for patronage. Their location in the field caused them to bend their energies exclusively to theatre for young people or to their audience base in the country or to remake their audience for every new project. For the amateurs, by this time, legitimacy lay with professionalism and for the occasional companies the irregularity of their professional product meant a looser and inconsistent hold on patronage. For these reasons, they are omitted from this study.

Besides these, other areas of activity such as cultural action through theatre are relevant as many of the same faces appear in these groupings and activities. However, when one is looking at the central focus of enterprise these activities become somewhat indistinct and only irregularly arise from the periphery.

The role in the constellation of the training institutions is omitted also though all have been influential. These were the Flinders University Drama Centre ('Flinders') and the Department of Technical and Further Education's (TAFE) Centre for Performing Arts (CPA). To a lesser extent the then Department of Drama at the University of Adelaide (formerly a part of the Adelaide College of Advanced Education which was subsumed into the University) produced influential figures (among them Robin Archer and Chris Westwood) within the South Australian and wider Australian scene.

All were conscious of their role in producing skilled professionals for the local scene who would be capable of applying their skills anywhere. All had a record of accomplishment and the basic product from each was accredited professionals able to perform reliably in as many circumstances as possible. That is, they could adhere to a variety of rehearsal approaches, had a good understanding of varying theatrical forms, knew how to portray character convincingly, could use their voice and body well and may even be able to sing and dance creditably.

Yet each had particular areas they consciously favoured. Flinders sought associations with, and favoured areas of, theatre similar to, in the exemplars of this thesis, the ideologies, processes and approaches of the APG. Flinders was instrumental in attracting and then producing groups of students that followed such lines. In the present study, the Red Shed collective is a case in point. The CPA at the time had a director in Brian Debnam who had been a co-director with the Stage Company and later successfully directed Harvest Theatre Company for some years. The CPA also had a specialty in technical training in line with the aegis of TAFE. The Department of Drama at the University of Adelaide geared itself towards producing professionals who could work in educational and community theatre.

These inclinations reveal a configuring process like the one studied here and overlaying it at many points. Thus, there were naturally influences in both directions and natural alliances and rivalries. However, outcomes in the field of professional theatre are not directly the concern of players in the field of professional training. They explain the techniques and arrangements of the ritual for which they train the talent, but for players

operating in the field of professional training, their contention is with their competitors. Therefore, they are omitted from this study.

As there is little pressure from performer or market by Dance and Opera on the dramatic theatre constellation these theatrical forms are also omitted. This relative absence of pressure is so since the skills threshold for entry into these professions, with the exception of administrators, a few directors, technicians and almost no performers (with remarkable exceptions such as Denis Olsen) is quite different to that required for drama. This is even so with respect to the funding of the companies as the proportion of the funding to dance and opera remains relatively stable. Moreover, when pressure exists once again there is a field effect and dance companies or opera companies will contend with their like. The division of the performing arts field is in itself important. Unlike can often survive together, such as dance and drama, where like must compete. A strategy in competition is to appear sufficiently 'unlike' with enough ideological strength such that the resulting demarcations of style demand a guaranteed place in the estimation of patronage. This is a very real strategy and is fundamental to the survival of the companies considered here, as we shall see.

The Legacy of the Amateurs.

Before proceeding to a sketch of the constellation of funded adult theatre in Adelaide, I will give a brief consideration of the position of the amateur theatre companies. The significance of these companies lies in their continuing, though subsiding importance in the city up to and including the period under consideration. The central position they once occupied contributed directly to the shape of activity at this time.

These companies also retained a representation in terms of numbers of groups and their placement within the central business district in adequate if old theatre buildings. This was a unique situation for an Australian capital city. There were three important amateur companies at the time: The Guild, The Therry Dramatic Society and The Adelaide Repertory Theatre. La Mama, though a part of this scene, was more peripheral and had not significantly fed the funded adult scene in the way these larger companies had in the past. Significantly, it also denoted a differing ideology, that of the avant-garde in theatre. This kind of movement used theatrical techniques to disrupt the normative face of social interaction. In this way, it mimicked in Adelaide what La Mama mimicked in Melbourne, the original New York enterprise that stood for the same area of ideas.

Despite some loss of direction and gradual loss of market share, the 'mainstream' amateur companies retained a position because, it seemed, of two factors. First, commercial theatrical opportunities had perhaps not been fully exploited in Adelaide. So, the amateur companies tended to provide most of the light comic fare and some of the musicals. Secondly, they fitted and had fitted for many years an old Adelaide dominant-class view of itself as amateur, cultured and patrician. An approach of some local theatre criticism that did not critically distinguish between amateur and professional theatre tended to support this view. This is an observable tendency of critics in large regional centres such as Newcastle or Canberra and not unique to Adelaide.

Finally given the niche driven nature of four of the five funded companies of this study and excepting the STCSA, the amateur companies continued to provide a regular, 'middle of the road' (with the Guild at the 'higher-brow' end) theatre experience in the heart of Adelaide. No longer were they the home of the trained players, yet they maintained the standards that better amateur companies can the world over, drawing talented performers to them but without as often the trained flair that professionalism can attract.

Yet, behind this, they represented a continuation of varieties of established English theatre that had come to represent the discourse of excellence in theatre art. That notion defined itself in contradistinction to the 'popular' and mass forms and sought to combine, under the aegis of excellence, notions of taste, refinement and intellect. Thus, from the University of Adelaide, home of the Guild, to the Rep and Therry, these companies together continued to represent the legitimate wellspring of these ideas. Their continuity placed beyond doubt and made commonsensical the power of the arguments of excellence further hiding their social roots in class. This underlying argument and contestation in the space of possible ideas permeates this story. The fact that excellence sits behind occupation of niches and that behind it sit basic economic contestations, begs the question of what the social mechanisms are that produce these effects.

Some Major National Cultural Patterns Reflected in Adelaide.

The configuration of theatre in Adelaide reflects some major national cultural patterns that developed during the seventies, persisting in some respects up to the nineties and beyond. In the larger Australian mainland capital cities the pattern is determined by the presence of a 'flagship company' alongside of which can be found a company with a 'radical' version of the flagship's mainstream theatrical style. The 'radicalism' of

this company could be defined as much or more at the marketing and programming levels as at the level of staged content. Belvoir Street Theatre's (the company that took over the second Nimrod Theatre space and, intrinsically, its mantle) *Radical Classics* season of 1988, to which I will allude later, exemplifies this stylistic ploy. The second company cannot produce precisely the same style of work without altering its appearance at the marketing level and then reflecting this appearance at the levels of programming and of staging to at least the extent required to justify patronage in terms of audience or grants.

Behind this arrangement near the 'cultural apex' of the pattern, exist theatrical endeavours surviving by virtue of specific and supportive political, cultural or regional affiliations and the successful legitimation of these affiliations within the presiding funding regime. Another significant factor is a culture of personal endurance continually nurtured within the group.

Beside these are the commercial and amateur enterprises, which survive outside the funding regime and rely on public patronage and/or the patronage of theatre 'lovers'.

However, the picture, as presented, had evolved and was evolving. The history was one of critical change occurring in one section or other every few years. Naturally enough, a reassertion of a public front asserting cultural coherence marks the moments at which the passage of critical change seems to have achieved stability. What determines the public stance of theatre in an Australian capital city - in this case Adelaide? Moreover, what are the determinants that produce change?

Those considering themselves accountable for any slice of cultural prestige (meaning especially those responsible for funding decisions) will attempt to present an aesthetically full and ideologically pleasing impression of their cultural profile to those they believe to be their 'punters'. Such an impression will aim at endurance and wide mandate and/or some appearance of just mandate. Adelaide's culturati are no exception and there existed a belief at that time, which had endured for some years, that they'd got the mix right; a mix of high prestige cultural capital, liberal and culturally inclusive theatre and the avant-guard/experimental.

In Adelaide, the national pattern varied reflecting both the political interests that nested and survived in the theatrical scene and a funding endorsement for that nexus. This manifestation of the national configuration was considered a highly satisfactory model and change was seen as a refinement to the model. There existed a belief in that arrangement as satisfying all comers from community theatre to high art.

Within this arrangement the size of the market in Adelaide and the relative success of its local 'flagship' had meant that the 'second company', in terms of legitimacy, had different features to that pertaining in the other large capitals of Australia and the relative prominence of the other smaller companies was greater. Further, the position of the amateur companies received some important boosts, particularly within the media. All of these factors gave Adelaide its different character in variance to the other capitals.

The Legitimating Feedback Loop.

A concept that will be explored as I proceed is the 'legitimating feedback loop'. It describes the reinforcing pattern that exists amongst any producer, the product and its ultimate patronage; what the cultural diamond view refers to as the consumer. Here I use the term patronage since the determination of success in any field is more complex than consumption alone. This is so in the field of funded theatre. In this chapter for example, we will already be aware that the tests of legitimacy go beyond market value and that positions are occupied according to complex networks of patronage. Survival therefore, depends on managing this complexity of patronage, which includes the box office market for the product.

Knowledge of success and maintenance of position for any company in these circumstances and, in fact, for any social player comes as feedback via the product from the various forms of patronage. Such feedback legitimates the product and by extension, the foundations of the ideological claim the player (person, group or organisation) makes on expressive space within the space of possible ideas. This is the legitimating feedback loop. In this field, box office is a major indicator and in many ways, it is the most direct. The continuing support of ideologically sympathetic areas of patronage and of the influence of those with government and various forms of sponsorship can be equally crucial.

Though patronage and its responses are readily understandable in any sort of art practice, the legitimating feedback loop is an important concept in all group and individual behaviour. It is an important case where the appearance has a specific applicability to the arts but where general sociological applicability is warranted. In other studies, this observation might cause us to consider the meaning of patronage and of how the loop would operate in those circumstances. How does it operate for example on a school playground, or in the staffroom, the family or within any agglomeration of individuals into the recognisable connections of a group?

Funded Adult Theatre in Adelaide: A Sketch of the Constellation.

Adelaide people conscientiously exhaust themselves in intellectual rigour once every two years for one month. How can you expect them to do it for the other 23? The biennial Adelaide Festival of the Arts is a showpiece event for the city having gathered a reputation on an international circuit. It had been the doyen of arts festivals in Australia.

Together with its related fringe, a festival of significance in its own right, which at the time of this study had garnered its own permanent artistic and administrative space endowed by the state government, the theatrical offering of the Festival of Arts has occupied a central position in the theatre-going choices of the theatre-going public. It dominates the market for a longer period than the month that it occupies for several reasons. For many theatregoers the lead up is a period of saving while the aftermath is a period of financial recovery. It is also a period of cultural surfeit for the city so that the period after must possess especially stimulating fare to be attractive.

These kinds of effect mean that theatre companies must be careful in the festival year of the nature and timing of their programming and be well positioned within the Festival itself. Most work hard at this and certainly the foremost example during the 1992 Festival was the outdoor production by Doppio Teatro *Festa di Nozze* that attracted and maintained a central focus to itself within a very attractive Festival marred by a recessionary impact. Ken Lloyd, then working at the Art Gallery of South Australia but shortly before a senior figure with the SA Department of the Arts (DepArts) felt that there was a decline at this time. That the State Lottery Unclaimed Prize Monies, mooted to be allocated to the Festival, were allocated to the Flinders Medical Centre, the major Hospital for the Southern Region of Adelaide, was considered by Lloyd to reflect a diminished priority for the Arts within 'the Festival State'.

The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust (AFCT) administered the festival and, during this 1992-3 period, was also engaged as a production company itself, generally of large-scale musicals such as *The King and I*. However, for this story the AFCT was regarded as a more-or-less benign presence. Those who may object to it on ideological grounds (it was sometimes perceived as elitist) simply accept that it is there and are glad it doesn't actively impinge upon their existence. Others appreciate its resource as a complex of available theatre spaces (which, with nous, can be lucrative) and as a technical resource.

Adelaide has a good pool of well-qualified technicians reasonably readily available because of the presence of the AFCT. It is, then, a major

presence, as is the Festival, around which many activities and enterprises operate but, while significantly limiting the pie, does not figure actively in the constellation I am describing.

The major player here is the STCSA, which occupies offices in the Festival Centre and is the main company in the Playhouse theatre within the Festival Centre. The STCSA mounts a number of productions each year in the Space Theatre, also within the Festival Centre. Towards the end of the period studied there were changes occurring in the State Theatre Company. These provide a number of insights both about a trajectory for the constellation and more generally, about the sociological mechanisms I posit in this thesis.

At this time, there were four other companies within the definition I have offered. These were The Red Shed, Doppio Teatro, Junction Theatre Company and Vitalstatistix. Each had a specific market and rhetoric. All have a character that is culturally less conservative than the STCSA or the Festival Centre but different in their own ways.

Significantly, The Red Shed inherited the mantle of an earlier company, Troupe Theatre, which had operated out of the same space and with similar aesthetic and political attitudes. Concerned for the plight of the world's victims and conscious of political and economic power disparities the world over, the company richly attempted to combine this political consciousness with an aesthetically adventurous approach. Their style was characterised by an intense and engaged acting style and staging often determined by the environment chosen for the piece combined with an immediacy for the audience.

Doppio Teatro, an Italian language company, had made a place for itself in this nexus basing its claim on the multicultural consciousness that had grown up in Australia during the preceding generation and found institutional power during the eighties. Their work was largely bilingual and they made interesting usage of novel spaces. Unlike the Red Shed this usage was not primarily a focus in itself, rather the usage of space supported the Italian-Australian atmosphere of the events.

Vitalstatistix was a company formulated on a feminist philosophy and pursued a depiction of lives reflective of that consciousness. Experimentation in its work sought to broaden the appeal of such an approach by applying a variety of established genres and styles to the experiences of women treated from a feminist viewpoint. Its ventures onto the mainstage established an aspiration to a style of theatre and to a cross-section of audiences beyond the working class Port Adelaide base, home to their administration and much of their work.

Junction Theatre Company, which arose from a Community Theatre Project of the early eighties, entitled *Theatre About Us*, described itself as a workers theatre company with a brief to tour working places with shows dealing with issues concerning the experience of workers. Like the other companies, it actively sought styles, performance modes and acting styles that reflected the ethos of the company and aimed to entertain while prompting a focus on some aspect of political or cultural value.

This is a brief description of each of the companies in order that a basic understanding of the components of the layout of theatre in Adelaide at this time can be appreciated. The story here is of the layout itself.

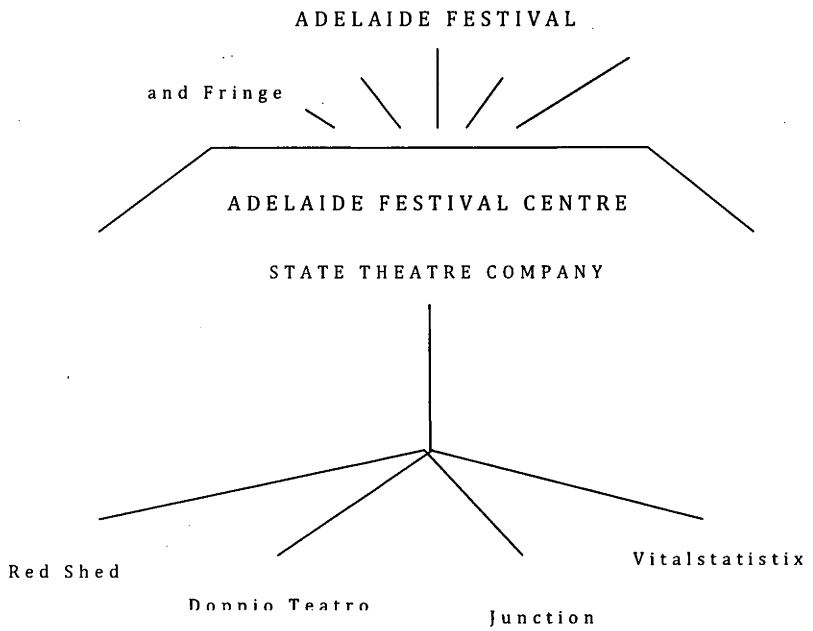

Figure 3 **Layout of the constellation according to relative resource share.**

The figure above setting out this layout graphically suggests the dominance of one company over a number of the smaller. Ken Lloyd preferred to express the constellation as in the following figure [79] (see on page 109):

Lloyd wished to value the companies equally with the State Theatre Company. Clearly, this seems absurd. One can look at this from a monetary point of view and see that the STCSA received $1.6m in 1991-92 as opposed to a total of circa $.5m to the combined smaller companies (including the country based Mainstreet) in the same period. Yet the valuing evidenced here, one may assume, had the significance of governmental wishes re perception of its patronage. Within the context elaborated earlier of a state constructing an important aspect of its identity on cultural pre-eminence, Lloyd adds this post seventies access and equity interpretation of government policy. The ideologies offered by these companies are an ingredient of the cultural mix contributing to a broader identity sought by the state. The funding of a variety of theatre enterprises espousing the political representation of minorities and comparatively

79 Fry, Garry, Interview with Ken Lloyd, Art Gallery of South Australia, 29/10/1992.

radical views of the world reflects these values. However, the relativity of funding reveals a deeper truth about ruling ideas. The notion of excellence as tied up with high art and the distinctive uses of mainstream culture continues to be reflected in the funding.

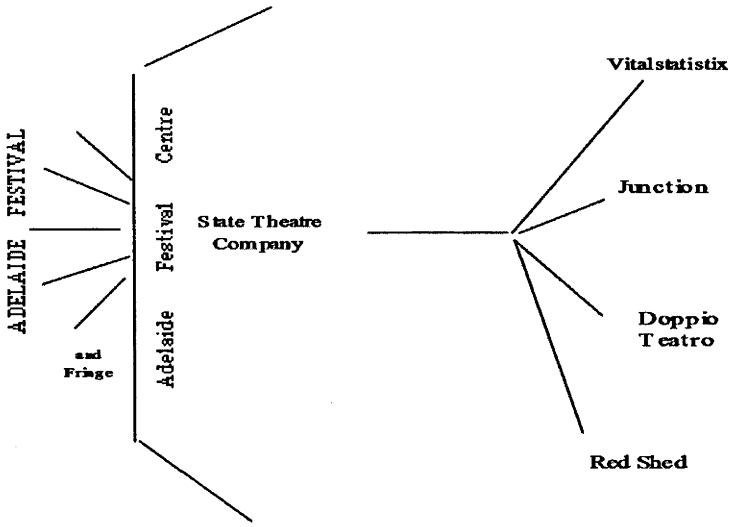

Figure 4 **The constellation as equally valued.**

The marks of culture as entertainment on the one hand, as vested in the Festival Centre and as the enrichment of the 'cultured mind' on the other as vested in the Adelaide Festival and the State Theatre Company remain dominant.[80] The state financial servicing of this image, which must be acknowledged therefore as electorally powerful and a major component of state cultural identity, represents this dominance.

> *Whereas the 'intellectual' fractions expect rather from the artist a symbolic challenging of social reality and of the orthodox representation of it in 'bourgeois ' art, the 'bourgeois' fractions expect their artists, their writers, their critics, like their couturiers, jewellers or interior designers, to provide emblems of distinction which are at the same time means of denying social reality.*[81]

Cherie LeCornu, the Promotional Manager at the STCSA emphasised this, pointing out that sponsors know there will be an audience at an STCSA

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80 Of course, this distinction evaporates at Festival time and as we shall see in Chapter 15 the Festival Centre launched a program that for a time challenged the 'cultural' hegemony of the STCSA.

81 Op. cit., Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p293

show (therefore avoiding the embarrassment of an empty house) and that the experience overall will be classy and comfortable.[82]

The horizontal depiction, while belying of course the actuality, represented a desire by government to be seen as even-handed. It was an attempt to balance the provision of services within an electoral climate where access and equity had achieved shibbolethic power. This signified an evolution of values out of the liberationist ideologies that emerged in the sixties and found various forms of institutional legitimacy during the seventies.

A production by Vitalstatistix of a play entitled *Yellow Roses* emphasised the distinction that exists here. Played in the Festival Centre the production deliberately attempted to write within the genre of light comedy and to attempt to capture audiences who attend theatre at that end of the spectrum. There was an acknowledgment of actuality and a sense of necessity here. It was not necessarily believed that some cultural border could be crossed but Vitalstatistix clearly felt an experiment was worthwhile. A belief in the probability of success accompanied the experiment. The company worked at this tactically at every level from the play itself to the production and the marketing strategy.

This 'horizontal' view of the constellation was considered into the mid nineties as realising a kind of 'optimum' in theatrical provision. That is, the funding was seen as reaching out to every quarter of the population. It satisfied workers, women, the ethnic community and the radical avant-guard as well as the educated and 'cultured'. Beside these were the youth companies and a range of projects. In the country, the same view was entertained with regard to Mainstreet and, at that time, Harvest Theatre Company, the mainstage regional touring company. The view seemed to attest the equity principle that underlay the rhetoric. However, it never stood up to scrutiny.

A meeting of Artistic Directors of the small companies (including Stephen Gration, the then Artistic Director of the STCSA's theatre-in-education company, Magpie, but not including the then STCSA Artistic Director) in late 1992 brought forth a number of comments about this perspective. At the time the discussion was in the context of the recent revealing of Performing Arts Board (then Australia Council board dealing with funding of this area of theatre activity) grants that tended to suggest that that body was backing away from funding this set up. I tested them on this attitude and wondered whether they thought that theatre had reached an 'optimum'.

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82 Fry, Garry, interview with Cherie LeCornu 11/10/92.

Margie Fischer of Vitalstatistix considered that it was an issue if theatre had reached an 'optimum'. Fischer's point was that an 'optimum' implies stasis and that that is never desirable. She saw the recognition of this point as the specific prerogative and responsibility of the Department and that encouraging creativity was clearly the task required. In balance, she also felt that there was too much of a mentality that it had to be done by grant here in SA the reality being that enterprise can produce results

Stephen Gration lauded the 'diversity' and was sorry that the Performing Arts Board seemed to back away from it. His stance was protective of the stasis or status quo.

By the mid nineties, however, it was a perspective on the decline before the reality that there were simply too many reasonable claims on the funding dollar from all sorts of quarters for this kind of policy to be sustained. Doppio Teatro, for instance, was obviously an Italian ethnic theatrical voice and even then could lay no claim to representation of, or accessibility for, the entire Italian community. Furthermore, the Greek language local company, Teatro Oneiron, threatened it for funding making the mistaken basis of the ambit claim of optimum provision fatuously obvious. Jula Szuster, a project officer at DepArts at this time, commented, "If one of the companies were to 'fall over' tomorrow one of those waiting in the wings is Teatro Oneiron."[83]

Ken Lloyd's revaluing of the smaller companies as equal in importance to the STCSA could be seen as a kind of 'rearguard' valuation in the light of the gradual erosion of the optimum provision view. It was a response to the vertical diagram as too frankly displaying the status represented in the configuration and so graphically displacing the vestiges of the previous view. This is not to say that value was not acknowledged. It was that the rhetorical reification attempted to disguise the reality of the pattern.

Often, it was seen as, loosely, strength in diversity, an attitude expressed by Stephen Gration above. Such a characterisation did fit the patterning described while attributing a value to it that related to access and equity principles. Yet, the appellation was vague and part of the rhetoric of equity, which by the nature of rhetoric sought to disguise the multiplicity of views that can inhere to one pattern. It was a tactic of justification.

Complicating the picture but, in effect, providing an evolutionary principle in the formulation of government funding policy is the notion, as Ken Lloyd put it, that "DepArts responds". It is evolutionary in that the ferment of ideas and practices can affect a cultural milieu if governments possess a capacity to respond. The response in itself is a kind of, to press the

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[83] Fry, Garry, interview with Jula Szuster 9/11/1995.

analogy, social selection and that aspect of the ferment presumably loudest or most pressing will determine the shape of the new cultural activity.

The "DepArts responds" view of funding determination tended to contradict the 'values' view which suggests that values are determined and funding follows. In fact, it emphasises that values are rationally constructed on the successful outcome of government response and the style of legitimation invoked by those successful ideas to which government has responded. One could ask: why wouldn't the 'strong voices' that attract the funding response be reflective of 'values'? They may well. Nevertheless, as we saw, for instance, in the case of *Doppio Teatro* the values are invoked to protect the position. This does not mean that this or another company does not represent what the community attests as value; this is one of the tests of legitimacy that patronage makes. However, it does mean that the test of value cannot be the only consideration the government makes and that it itself is very conscious of the legitimating feedback loop it has in place with its own patronage/constituency.

As this should show, Lloyd could be one for having 'a bob each way' liking "to see what is supported, institutionalised" but thinking that "yes there is a 'natural life' for companies" and that is "based as often as not on people". Decisions, he said, arise from "history, politics and personality", i.e. not from assessments of the needs as evaluated for the arts in the city.[84] Having moved from one position requiring him to express a legitimating view, Lloyd had acquired some distance from which the actuality of the circumstances could be expressed.

Tactics of legitimation determine product and maintain placement of an ascendant activity in the field. I am referring to the positive view of the pattern as the construction of a retrospective value built on a series of funding policies reflective of strong positional voices. Clearly, the rhetoric of government is important to companies themselves. There is a legitimating symbiosis in the situation that works to keep out competition. A major tactic here is the simpatico of legitimacy.

Style, Tactics and Legitimacy.

Almost all aspects of any configuration result from the energies and desires of the individuals and groups who produce the theatre. If they

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[84] Op. cit., Fry, interview with Ken Lloyd.

succeed in finding a market or finding a 'legitimate' idea with sufficient support then they can expect to achieve a degree of institutionalisation.

What is crucial is the claim to legitimacy. What aspects are there to the package in which this claim is made? Style is the wrapping of a matrix that includes legitimation - in institutional terms - tactics, purpose or ideology and placement.

I asked Margie Fischer, co-Artistic Director of Vitalstatistix about her style and she denied having one.[85] Yet, she went on to say that she has a focus and an intention to make all shows 'popular' by which she meant

> *that they can be understood by all, that they are funny, and that they are written and produced from a women's perspective.*[86]

What did Fischer mean by saying she does not have 'style'? Each of these three intentions behind Vital's shows added up to what is often broadly described as a 'house style'; and in this case, that would not be far from an identity with the styles of Fischer and her co-artistic director, Roxxy Bent.

Let's view it in another way. Fischer and Bent with these intentions were avowedly working for a broader acceptance of their work than the narrowing one of feminist ideology. Though informed and driven by feminist notions, they are worldly and pragmatic and so operate tactically. That is, they confined the expression of their ideology to tactics that might optimise company survival. Survival of the company amounts to survival of their artistic expression and of their means to position their ideology. Significantly, they will have achieved control over a de-centred area of expression and practice.

'Having no style' then, is the willing adoption of a particular approach (and possibly subsuming alternative approaches) for tactical reasons in order that the space to express is preserved. One may assume, perhaps, that for Fischer, 'style' was a frivolously adopted embellishment, a dilettantism of which her company was not guilty. Her company focus, then, was neither frivolity nor embellishment; rather it was a hard-nosed tactic of survival enabling space to express an ideological position, an ideological position aimed at position attainment with regard to another and broader social field – women's place in society.

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85 Fry, Garry, interview with Margie Fischer, 2/11/1992.

86 Ibid.

Paradoxically, this ideological position was the reason for their government patronage since the idea of expression for differing cultures and for expressing the political plight of subsumed groupings in society, women's rights in this case, had long been part of a significant and now powerful part of the ruling culture. That they managed to popularise their work meant that government patronage could be further justified.

I do not mean to suggest that purpose or ideology is subsumed with this or any other company simply to the tactics of survival. Tactics, style, purpose, ideology - legitimacy - are inextricably interlinked factors. Tactics are predicated on style and constrained by ideology. The focus of analysis then should be on this interlinking of aesthetics, ideology and pragmatism.

What was, therefore, interesting about the work of Fischer, Bent and Vitalstatistix is the tactical flexibility adopted in the company's approach to survival. In accepting a ground of 'popular' work as the starting point, a minimum compromise of purposes was enabled. In so far as this was achieved, it reflected an attitude of toleration towards, and a desire to offer a degree of artistic prosperity to, a company that reflected a way of life challenging to conservative social/sexual mores.

Vitals did not have 'automatic acceptance'. It was not a company that excited a feeling of 'comfort' amongst the cultured and established. Other companies were seen as 'in the wings' and ready to occupy the position that Vitals then occupied. Nevertheless, the prevailing attitude of tolerance and even encouragement of diversity ensured that such a company must have a place. In this sense, the company's very existence legitimated the community value. Because of this nexus of ideological reliance, Vitalstatistix occupied a strong position though socially its ideology may have sat least comfortably within the theatrical constellation of this city.

Similarly, these observations apply in their own ways to each of the companies. For example, in the early eighties Junction Theatre Company was well positioned. Its beginning coincided with the fruition of the *Theatre About Us* projects and in conjunction with a national community theatre conference occurring at a time when community theatre was at the crest of a wave. The movement had outlived by then the first flush of fervour and was already experiencing the counter attack of a conservative government. However, in South Australia, as much in reaction to this national conservatism, the community theatre ideal was well established and with the sympathy of a new labour government in a state which despite its cultural pretensions was significantly working class in its demography. Federally also the community theatre movement maintained the protection of the community arts establishment within the Australia

Council. So things were ripe for the formation of Junction Theatre Company and with significant support within the union movement and later from the Australia Council's "Arts and Working Life" Fund, it could expect to hold a place in the estimation of the arts funding bodies provided its management, quality of product and audience reach continued to justify funding.

As with Vitals, the newly strong ideology of access and equity played a part in the maintenance of the legitimacy of Junction Theatre Company. Again, this was theatre serving a sectional interest. However, the Junction's power base was broader. The difficulty would always be in the differences within the union movement and the extent to which Junction would be able to maintain a sense of usefulness to it. Even that usefulness would only be computed in the intangible terms of worker benefit.

Again, Doppio Teatro grew in the same ideological environment and the access of sectional groups as an important issue gave this group access to legitimacy as it did Vitalstatistix and Junction. With Doppio, the sectional ideology was multiculturalism, which from all sides of politics, though with the inevitable dissension of the right wing of the conservative parties, was reified as part of the national ethos. Once again, quality, good management and reasonable audience support would for the most part be enough to ensure survival.

Clearly specialised factors and individuals are important in each of these successes However by then the established ideology of access and equity was a major factor behind this configuration and it is fairly certain that were this ideology to have waned, the basis of legitimation for each of these groups would have been seriously undermined. The demise of the Red Shed (that occurred outside of the scope of this study) seems to have reflected precisely this. The Red Shed's collectivist governance and expression, it was presumed, had become too 'insular' for the more powerful policies– or ideology – of the federal funding body. This will be glanced at in the chapter on the demise of the APG.

A likely scenario, perhaps an inevitable and necessary step for each group would be to appeal to the sectional in terms of their sectional interests even more strongly. The irony in such a situation would be that the notion of plurality implied by access and equity and a co-operative, mutually supportive community would have given way to the competition implied by sectionalism so that for instance Doppio Teatro could have given place to a Teatro Oneiron. Well before this were likely to happen, further ideologies perhaps invoking professionalism or excellence, will have emerged pragmatically in defence of position. This irony in itself lays bare

the strength and fundamental determining power of the motivation for position. Our culture affords access and equity. Naturally, all cultures will need notions of access and equity where they contribute to the tactics required for group survival. Where they don't they will adopt others.

During this survey of one aspect of theatrical activity in Adelaide in the first half of the 1990s, ideas have surfaced that have provided a framework for explanation. These have included configuration, ideology, legitimacy, the legitimating feedback loop, position and style. We may also note that ideological claims can be seen to belie the positional actuality of tactics. That is, what we state can at best only strive to reveal what we do and that favoured ideologies may give place to others pragmatically. These paradoxes indicate an underlying level of unacknowledged interactive activity. I will now turn to placing these ideas into a broader theoretical structure and work towards describing a mechanism of positioning for groups that implies a transformational process.

Chapter 7. Legitimacy and Style.

Thus far, we have been able to observe the interconnectedness of person and group and the necessary complementarity between them leading to the necessity of a balance of tensions in order to gain the resilience required for the positional struggle. We have observed then that contingency is necessary in the understanding of position, as is affinity of purpose. Within contingent circumstances such as a geo-polity, groups of similar purpose will form configurations based on ideological claims. I note that a geo-polity as in the case study example is not the only form of contingency as, for example, websites instance a form of contingency where geographical bounds can be almost meaningless. Out of ideological claims, styles appropriate to the maintenance of the expressive space will grow.

What is the nature of the field in which theatre companies strive for legitimacy?

This question begs inquiry as to the nature of their striving and of the history shaping the nature of the field's present. Therefore, we cannot be satisfied with simply a structural description. Observation of a field of practice during a limited period, as I have done in the previous chapter, tends in this direction. Additionally, a transformational dimension ought to be present and this must reveal processes of both legitimation and sustainable purpose.

In this chapter, I will continue to advance a theoretical structure with concern for the broader applicability of these unfolding ideas. I will consider both the role of theatre in social operations and the processes associated with legitimating that role. This will involve the relationship of the ideology that a company adopts to legitimate its claim to position and the style that sustains that legitimacy within the patronage it maintains.

I will also introduce a major ideology of claim within this field: excellence. So pervasive is this claim that it not only justifies dominant practice but also provides a normative context within which much of the legitimacy debate operates. This claim is examined as are opposing claims, each representing niches within the space of possible ideas and vying for maintenance and/or attainment of expressive space. Pervasive claims, however, will be given special consideration in chapters to follow. For now, I will consider excellence as an example.

Ideology, Knowledge, Style and Symbol

I will make use of the terms style, symbol, ideology and knowledge. For individuals and groups, each of these terms represents phenomena peculiar to their life environment. That is, each arises out of special contexts that are demarcated from others both by the peculiarities of the local geography and its natural conditions and then by the interactions with, and fields of activity placed upon, this geography. Each of these fields and the groups and individuals operating within them are demarcated from others by the identity conferred by that position.

Positions are defended. It is ideology to maintain, for example, that it is a 'birthright' however legitimate or defensible this claim may appear to be. Thus, *ideology is a statement of claim to a geo-political position within a life environment.* Extensive knowledge of this life environment and of historical (belonging or conferred) right to both the position within it and to the identity it confers, legitimates, that is gives authority to, the ideology associated with the position. So, *knowledge is constituted by ideas shaping the geo-political position and giving status to individual and group claims.*

Style is a flow of symbols. A suit, for example, has style containing strict delimitations for the regular wearer as to what it can and can't contain. Within its delimitations, it won't contain rips. Colour will be muted except for black itself. Formally and occupationally, it will require a tie. Within that style, each contribution to the texture of a 'style' is a meaningful symbol in itself. The muting, soft or sharp lines, the shape of the tie, even the name, 'suit', all communicate ideology of action and legitimacy of place. Each aspect of the texture of style is symbolic. We may say that the necktie itself is a symbol, a static representation of an idea. As part of the 'get-up' of a 'suit' it blends back into the flow we call style. The suit itself melts likewise indissolubly into the general shape and texture of action of those who wear suits, their style. So also, do the life environment paraphernalia surrounding position and the distinction of those who wear suits melt into the general stylistic cause of distinction from other groups, individuals and orders of belonging. Together and with use, these stylistic appurtenances, this myriad of symbolic displays of suits, ties, types of cars, performances seen, become part of a stylistic offering presenting as forceful a demarcation of style (what Bourdieu calls 'distinction') within the life environment as can be imagined and afforded. While simultaneously sending messages of legitimacy through the ideological assertion that is style, this symbol-rich stylistic surface or style-flow marks out each group's, culture's and sub-culture's areas of claim.

Style demarcates. Symbol emblemises.

Symbols are the reminders of alliance, of shared ideological view and of expressive space, or in other words, the overt marks or continuity amongst deliberately constructed discontinuities; group-to-group, family-to-family, culture-to-culture, race to race. Hebdige[87] notes how in 'sub-culture' stylistic flow is visible and does not melt into a background of legitimate presentation in the way that a suit does. It is also true that in the company of punks (Hebdige's example, below) or Goths the reverse is true and the suit and its tie are painfully visible whereas the spikes and skulls phase into invisibility. The point is that the style of the punk or the Goth is deliberately discontinuous with the dominant style and I will return to Hebdige's argument on this matter in a moment.

Like the dominant styles, punk or Goth or any other sub-cultural style is as much a reminder of alliance within the demarcated claims to space it makes, as it is 'discontinuity'. In being alliance, the emblematic symbols of style are deliberately discontinuous. The ordered, deliberately delimited riot of the necktie is as invisible as the skulls and spikes of the Goth are overt within the company of the dominant culture and both are equally about alliance. The overtness of the skull for the Goth as s/he passes through the landscape of the dominant culture, demonstrates how style is symbol flow, while the invisibility of the necktie as symbol in the same surroundings shows us how invisible this symbol flow, style, can become.[88] A brand or a slogan, like the skull, is an emblematic moment in the symbolic flow that works like a banner drawing adherents into a combined affirmation of separation and discontinuity beneath it.

The deliberate posture of discordance as an operation is typically reactive as it is defensively alert to threat. 'Sub-culture' connoting rebellious sub-groups is the classic modern example.

> *Style in sub-culture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalisation'. As such they are gestures, movements towards speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus.*[89]

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87 Op cit, Hebdige, p 3.

88 For the sake of clarity of argument, I have overlooked the observation that the subtleties of suit texture along with the statements of the tie design are opportunities within the general agreement to make small differentiating statements about selfhood. The same is so of the number of skulls or spikes the Goth wears or the quantity of outrage they seek to generate.

89 Op. cit., Hebdige, p 18.

Hebdige's work on style uses the language of punk as illustration: the words, the gestures, the clothes and the defiance. In talking of 'punk', he talks of a placement to the extreme of the social grouping but not out of it. It refers with its resistance, it belongs with its scream of alienation; it is not silently removed. It is a capturing of an unformed space that is in itself possible within the range of available ideas arising from the social, technological and historical moment. Hebdige later talks of the emergence in the early seventies of a "fully fledged nihilist aesthetic"[90] – a style available to be adopted containing a measure of resistance and repositioning.

Here is the transformational process, the practice of visibility through discordance. A remaking of space, through exploitation of style, in order to establish a 'beachhead' threatening and even occupying the centre and to lever, or to entrap, the existing placeholders into an untenable position vis a vis the centre and thereby claiming significant space. While relying on a Gramsciian understanding of hegemony (which "requires the consent of the dominated majority"[91]), Hebdige speaks of how, despite the unconscious nature of ideology and its suffusion within 'commonsense', there is always stylistic movement representing the undermining of the same hegemonic acceptance.

> *The consensus can be fractured, challenged, overruled, and resistance to the groups in dominance cannot always be lightly dismissed or automatically incorporated.*[92]

The transformational aspect of the interlocking mechanisms I am presenting fully embraces this idea of Hebdige's. Whether punk style or Goth style achieves it or contributes to it will be dependent on whether it gives voice to a larger pressure for change still to find its explaining emblem. Whether punk or Goth has an aim for revolution as Hebdige intimates, is a more important question. It is sufficient that the claim they make finds space, that other positions give ground and that the ideology contained in their stylistic front garners sufficient legitimacy to command that space for the expression of its sub-cultural adherents.

If ideology is a claim reinforced by a preparedness both to defend and to contend, then as a claim it will attempt to persuade, cajole, plead, intimidate and in fact employ any form of rhetoric that will aid the cause of its claim. Thus, ideology automatically adopts style, which is more than rhetoric or persuasion. The importance of ideology is that it demarcates

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90 Ibid., p 28.

91 Ibid., p 16.

92 Ibid., pp 16-17.

the claim of rightness from contending claims. The activities of groups in the life environment justify their claim to that activity and so the space they occupy in the life environment by overarching ideological claims. The manner of the activity must reinforce the claim. This is the style and it is pursued consistently from the rhetoric of ideological claim through to the manner of productive activity and social life.

As we have seen, within style we can pick out certain delimited promontories of aggregated meanings we call symbols. They stand within the flow of style according to principles of juxtaposition that reinforce the underlying ideological claim and stand as reminders of it and testaments to it and demarcating it from other claims. They are the banners of claim and of contention, at once the vessels of persuasion, the arrows of intimidation and the badges of identity.

Style, Need and the Tests of Legitimacy.

In considering legitimacy, Habermas's notion of the "speech act" is useful. Though his formulation "concentrated primarily on verbal or written utterances in which formally codified language is employed", Wuthnow et al believe the extension of this notion, as "communicative acts", to "other modes of communication" is "conceivable".[93] Habermas considers the speech act meaningful by contrast with four "domain[s] of reality" that affect the content and form of the act.[94] "The world of external nature" focuses on "truth", "the world of society" on "legitimacy", "the internal world", i.e. "the realm of subjectivity", on "truthfulness" and "the domain of language" on comprehensibility.[95]

Communicative action provides for Habermas a possible programme for piecing together the decayed relationships of modernity. Communicative action can exist as a mechanism for cultural advance and transmission. In this realm, art may operate as projection and clarification not in so much as stage actions, taken as the basic unit of dramatic art, are representative of 'truth' per se, but in that the illusions of art can achieve a connotative transparency leading to the attainment of deep recognitions and revelations.

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93 Wuthnow, Robert, James Davison Hunter, Albert Bergesen and Edith Kurzweil; *Cultural Analysis: The Work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas*; Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, London, 1984, p 200.

94 Ibid., p 206.

95 Ibid., pp 206 - 207.

In being art, theatrical actions are also elaborations of images; in a sense, they are the conduit of meaning contained in dramatic images. In drama, it is seldom enough simply to present an image; there is not the time for reflection on the image as with other art forms. The image is elaborated in the action. It is the interactions of characters and entities upon the 'ground', as it were, of the image that defines and intensifies it. For the audience, the intensification of the image is enabled by its (the audience's) own increasing recognition of the action. In dealing with an idea like communicative action, then, we are not in a merely discursive area but, when it comes to the connotations within cultural displays, we are examining the fundamental emotional power that is the consequence of our social attachments and concomitant cultural identity.

Any 'programme' like Habermas's aiming to renew or improve relationships is correct to enlist such power but a constant theme herein is the paradox of that power nesting as it does within the selfsame complex of positioning actions that characterise all of social interaction. Though each of Habermas's four domains provides a potential ground for critique or attack, that of legitimacy presents the greatest dilemma for practitioners. Legitimacy is the precondition of belonging and therefore requires proof. Proof requires expression and therefore disclosure. The task of providing proof implies in the first place knowledge of what the proof consists in and of the form it must take. For a performer the witnesses of his/her disclosure include fellow performers, company, director and others involved during rehearsal as well as audiences. However, audiences can only be the subject of speculation. This automatically produces in the performer a greater reliance on the company and causes a concomitantly greater potential anxiety about the audience. This anxiety is potentially heightened, given the reliance on the theatre company, as the theatre company itself attunes to the desires of audience and other patronage. A cycle with harmful possibilities for players is evident. In turn, greater needs to belong, to either the company and the sub-culture or cultural streams suggested by the sub-culture or to a primary group existent for the individual over and above the company, follow such anxieties.

Habermas's discussion however applies specifically to the state and its claims. 'Legitimacy implies recognition', or, in other words, to be recognised is to be legitimated, given a value, seen as belonging. The state's claims, furthermore, may be seen as valid virtually insofar as they are claims alone without the support of public opinion or tradition. "If a convincing claim ... can be made, then it may be said that the state must actually have gained widespread recognition".[96] Fundamentally, then, the

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[96] Ibid., pp 217 - 218.

state's claim to legitimacy is dependent on its ability to maintain social cohesion. This being so "the state's legitimacy depends ultimately on culture".[97] Though Habermas's view is not universally accepted, it has a revealing application in this discussion. [98]

In the situation of theatre, for state read theatre management for social cohesion read the legitimating feedback loop (see on page 104) amongst audience, management and creativity. This formulation depicts a circle of dependency where the theatre management occupies a central policy-determining position provided it can maintain its 'reading' of audience cultural outlooks or else successfully alter or amend them. It operates through box office in the most overt sense but also through abstruse means such as funding decisions, sponsorship and friendship groups. In other words, it is the response from the cultural milieu to the legitimacy claim for persistent use of expressive space. It is the conduit between activity and the cultural milieu.

Style is the interface where interactions occur. It is the surface of identity and transaction, the arena of legitimation. Even at the point where constructive action occurs, the construction itself as well as the process of construction and the construction as meaningfully reflective of its context will all have style. This may seem a redefinition of the word from its general associations and yet there is an underlying important point. I am suggesting that the business of survival is conducted with style, necessarily. Thus if a social system exists as a mode of survival, its style is formed in relation to those needs. Thus a system in balance, as it were, has a harmony of style and need.

However, this is not always and nor is it necessarily the case. Social cohesion may be a survival need but as it is gained through the development of a pattern of thought and ideology, so it is dressed with style and only thus available for legitimation, contestation or obliteration. It is at this point that social practice ossifies or becomes an end in itself and so ceases to be in harmony with need, threatening cohesion by the social dramatic tensions (see Social Drama on page 149). Style is a 'surface' and not necessarily in harmony with need so that while a desire for harmony between style and need may be felt it is experienced much less.

Habermas's domains, then, and their effects can be applied to a consideration of the communicative acts of theatrical processes. Each of these domains depicts an area of concern in the development of a theatrical work. Any rehearsal process seeks to ensure comprehensibility

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97 Ibid., p 218.

98 See Bellah cited in Wuthnow et al, ibid., p 219.

of the work, a sense of authenticity and to project an air of sincerity about its representations. The appearance of 'truthfulness' was, for example, a prominent touchstone in Australian theatre of the sixties and seventies. It was often the rubric by which the authenticity of a performance was gauged.

Defining the Position of Theatre Companies.

In determining position then, how theatre companies work out and project what they stand for becomes crucial to establishing their legitimacy. Theatre companies stand for either the identity construct of the group formed by the ruling inner circle or else they stand for the socially-fashioned, traditional/ritual purpose that social processes have moulded for them. Given the Adelaide exemplar of the first half of the 1990s, the former may be characterised by the Red Shed Theatre Company and the latter by the STCSA.

That is, the Red Shed, though occupying a specific available space in the geo-political space of possible ideas then current, was composed of a group who could occupy that space as a ruling inner circle. Though a collective, David Carlin, Cath McKinnon, Tim Maddock and those with them possessed the skills, attitudes and connections that enabled them to attract and confirm patronage and so occupy this space. By contrast, the STCSA existed by virtue of its place in the context of the cultural rituals that had developed in South Australia by that time. Each ruling circle in this company, led by the respective Artistic Directors, was required to read the boundaries of artistic behaviour available to them. There is room for 'flair' – it is a requirement – but flair that changes, narrows or confuses the intuitive cultural parameters, ie. that fails the tests of legitimacy, is gradually eschewed.

In either situation, the beliefs of the inner circle are known as far as they are able to express them and these beliefs are likely to have considerable congruence with the desires and beliefs of the patronage. These shared beliefs may have relevance to larger, even global conceptions of cultural or national 'good', indeed are likely to as their legitimacy will depend on their ideas having meaningful connection to the larger meanings that constitute the national identity. Nevertheless, they are primarily statements of right and definitions of dominion over space.

In this latter sense, it is not possible to know the motivations of individuals of the inner circle through recourse to their statements of beliefs. This is a definitional statement since it can be assumed that statements of belief justify positional interest and establish the bondings within the circle. This

is the working of the unacknowledged, a concept I will consider in Part Five. Survival of the circle depends upon the maintenance of the niche-forming statements of belief or ideology.

What companies stand for with regard to their position is thus intuited rather than overtly known. On the one hand, patronage has a response to what feels right stylistically and ideologically. On the other, art and theatre also provide reflective, entertaining and engaging experiences. A requirement of this engagement is an element of unpredictability and sheer joy in the skill of enactment. This phenomenon of engagement confirms that what patrons are sensing as an audience is largely congruent with their beliefs about what they are at any particular time.

Aphorisms as Stylistic Keys for Position Definition.

Representation of this position is determined in turn by choices made by artistic and general management. Their choices are intuitive judgements about the social and cultural parameters laid out for them. Statements of belief attempt to map out legitimising claims within these parameters. These are then captured within the style of presentation, the style of venue and facility and reinforced by the style of commentary and presentation of the audience itself. The legitimating feedback loop operates in a ritualistic manner where each half of the bargain, the company and the patronage, reinforce their intuition about the legitimacy of the position of the other from performance to performance. If the Red Shed was 'epic with a determination to reveal the underbelly of society' while the Junction Theatre Company at the time was 'satiric of the ruler and celebratory of the ruled' and the STCSA, 'comfortably stimulating', then these stylistic keys determined the flavour of rehearsal, writing, performance, speech, tone, design and decor. Thus, all appurtenances of style contribute to the flavour of the ideological stance.

The above aphorisms are mine expressing the rhetorical inclination of each of these companies. Some actual examples are: *Red Shed*: "surprise our audiences by the disruption of the conventional notions of theatre space".[99] *Junction*: "encourages open, public debate about social, political, economic and cultural issues".[100]

I referred to style sustaining legitimacy at the beginning of this chapter. This discussion of aphorisms exemplifies the way in which this occurs. Aphorisms underline the consciousness that correctly pitched style supplies the substance of the binding between activity and patronage,

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99 Red Shed Company Vision Statement. Undated and held in thesis archive of Garry Fry.

100 Paper for Artistic Reference Group Junction Theatre Company re Junction's Artistic Policy. 28/5/96 held in thesis archive of Garry Fry.

expression and reception. The test of legitimacy, in other words of receptivity to the ideological message, happens via the stylistic interface. If the message is right, it is conveyed by getting style right. Sustaining legitimacy over time is then achieved by style.

Aphoristic statements are simplified summations of the theatrical-social purpose of each of these companies and 'sum up' a stylistic thrust. Though the application of an aphorism can cover broad ground, the stylistic territory is essentially narrowed because the legitimating feedback loop is dependent upon a distinct level of expectation predictability. The legitimating feedback loop is an interaction between art practice and cultural milieu. Where the dominant ideas occur in the space of possible ideas, art practice is a legitimating reflection of the cultural milieu. The practice exists within the cultural milieu, responds to it and is formed by it.

Aphorisms have a particular role within the space of possible ideas - they determine a space of practical ideas. Amongst the possible ideas, for example, we might find an aphorism like 'the flower of the English dramatic voice'. Yet, this is unlikely to be practical and may only be useful in a marginalised nostalgic sense or drawn upon parodically within another aphorism.[101]

By creating this aphoristically limited style the company attempts to delimit an area within the space of possible ideas. It attempts to render it easily recognisable and incontestable by occupying an area of practical conception and dominating the theatrical manipulation of it. The company legends and traditional stories about individuals connected with the company reinforce what the companies stand for giving 'depth' to the aphorisms.

'Excellence'

In *Art and Organisation*[102], Deborah Stevenson considers the implications of an Australia Council[103] booklet that attempted to show the 'high' and 'popular' arts mixing it in the cultural landscape "including jazz in the outback and tap dancers in worker attire"[104]. Stevenson describes a

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101 Even so, one cannot underestimate an underlying appeal of the English dramatic voice. It can give one actor who deploys it favourably, legitimacy while rendering the sound of the Australian vernacular in the voice of another actor, parochial and coarse. Such is the persistence of this 'ideal'!

102 Stevenson, Deborah, *Art and Organisation*. University of Queensland Press, 2000.

103 The national arts funding body that replaced the aforementioned Australian Council for the Arts.

104 Op. cit., Stevenson, *Art and Organisation*, p1.

prosperity generating agenda where the arts and cultural tourism intersect and a sense of national identity is deliberately confused with the pursuit of what is vaguely termed without definition 'excellence' in art practice in order to ensure the continuity of public funding for 'high' art.

Deconstructing this obfuscation, she reports one academic, Gay Hawkins, as suggesting that the discovery of the 'community arts' as an area of arts practice came about through the identification of a 'non-appreciative' subject. This entity existed as an 'other' to the "elite valuing community constituted by the rhetoric of excellence". [105] Deborah Stevenson quotes others (for example, David Watt[106]) who see the community arts as an oppositional form and thus having a set of independent roots and practices. Hawkins's view throws an additional light on the patronage of the arts and its view of the place of theatre in society. It suggests that there is a defining role for the idea of 'appreciation' and that appreciation is of something called and recognised as 'excellence'.

The rhetoric of excellence corralled the original determination of what was to be under the aegis of comprehensive government funding of the arts when the Australian Council for the Arts was set up in 1969. It held that some organisations were able to produce work that could commend itself as excellent and so become a display of the nation's artistic worth. [107] Elsewhere Stevenson points out the insubstantiality of the 'nation' as defining anything particularly useful about culture.[108] She then expands upon this revealed attitudinal relationship between artistic excellence so-called and national identity. She suggests that to be a citizen

> *one is almost required to identify with other citizens through the sharing of myths and histories.*[109]

Within the process of transformation of meaning flowing from the explosion of new theatrical activity that occurred in the late sixties and seventies, Stevenson has noticed the attempted preservation of an older, apparently indisputable ethos, excellence. Meyrick refers to something very similar in his book concerning Nimrod and the New Wave.

> *The word that recurs with all the force of an idée fixe in the memoirs of John Sumner, the founding father of the Union Theatre Repertory Company (UTRC), later the Melbourne*

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105 Ibid., pp 54-55.
106 Ibid., p 56.
107 Ibid., p 29.
108 Ibid., pp 24-30 passim.
109 Ibid., p 26.

> *Theatre Company best sums up the abiding obsession of a generation of Anglo artists: a concern with 'standards'. This prim-sounding goal is used time and again to clarify and justify a range of company programs and initiatives.*[110]

Thus, rather than a requirement "to identify with other citizens through the sharing of myths and histories" the actual invitation is to continue occupation of an elite space by participation in the ideology of excellence (or standards) mediated through a nationalist discourse. Stevenson variously describes in her work the justification of high art through the notion of excellence. In this instance and in the face of a transforming geo-polity, renewed legitimacy is re-negotiated for an elite practice by appending the discourse of nationalism (a discussion pursued below from page 189). The recognition of the appended idea, nationalism, registers the transformation and its newly legitimate status and elevates the placement of its associated practices in the space of possible ideas. Thus, we may note that nationalist ideas are brought to the forefront as a trade-off between 'high' as against 'oppositional', 'community' and/or 'popular' arts.

Art Practice and Isolation –Recognition and the Individual.

Since, for many, art practice is a yearning, art groups will provide the social need for identity leading them to group identification. This applies despite the very isolated nature of many art forms. As recognition of one's work becomes a powerful motivation leading to the desire for membership, it is a strong individual who is able to stand aside successfully from the throng. Desire for recognition is of course simply another way of saying the desire to gain position. In the performing arts, the essentially group nature of the work accentuates this effect through the constancy of contact and group activity.

The further the ideas of the group exist towards the periphery of the space of possible ideas, the more isolated and socially alienated individuals will feel and become. Within the performing arts, the legitimating feedback loop can become especially dispiriting and isolating if some other strategy is not adopted to legitimate this very marginal existence. It is worth pausing to remember that with the art world we are already viewing a field that exists at the periphery of the quotidian. Its inhabitants already exist in relative isolation from the mainstream so that social isolation is an

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110 Meyrick, J, See How It Runs: Nimrod and the New Wave. Currency Press, 2002, p 5.

undercurrent in their lives. Loss of attachment in this field is especially hazardous to selfhood, rendering more powerful the strength of group actions.

Peripheral existence brings with it anxiety made keener by consciousness of isolation. Since the artistic mode of occupational existence has a reflective role, the constraints of position bring with them reflexivity, an accompanying and heightened consciousness of the personal within the social. Thus, both the occupational mode and the peripheral existence reflect upon and explore the social as the social affects selfhood.

Selfhood survives through attachment to many groups, through the consciousness of history and through events of self-description. Even so, as the personal is bound up with the interactive and so the social, selfhood depends, therefore, on the freedom to pursue individual strategies permitted within the constraints and elasticities of the legitimating group ideas. Again, these are manifested in style – of rule, of fashion and of attitude.

Here is a liminoid activity, carried on at a periphery of society and according to an insecure economics and pragmatics of position for both individuals and groups. The affective result is an anxiety resulting from consequent social isolation and marginalisation. Their actual mundane existence mirrors the liminoid nature of their activity. In this sense, they are a metaphor of their own calling.

For Bourdieu, the theatre is an activity called on and used to mark a distinction. We will choose to see what we believe to be the badge of our sought for and maintained belonging. For Turner, it represents something quite different but which does not exclude this Bourdieu idea. It is reflexive and thereby can be both socially redressive and transformative. Its participants operate within both frameworks: they belong and demarcate their belonging by what they see. They also do their seeing where they wish to be seen. Moreover, they are concerned to record reflexively the operations of the social that surrounds them but with regard to which they are or consider themselves to be, peripheral. Bourdieu states the pure pragmatics of this situation while Turner sees it as potentially healing – artists as both social actors and carriers of a healing role. In terms of position, these social actors are a pointer to a reflexive potential in all groups.

Most groups are local and affected by contingent other groups especially those intersecting with their lives. It is noticeable that in *The Story of Larry and Ben* (see on page 138), a play that explored boys' culture and especially from the point of view of boys disaffected from schooling, the importance of the contingent and overarching meta-identity represented by

the school itself, is made to be paradoxically small. The boys' major activity is the maintenance of their own 'popular group' identity and their insistence on the importance of this to those spatially and needfully nearby. They deliberately eschew the meta-identity of school and acknowledge it only insofar as it is responsible for their group's determining constraints. When the identification desire of a central group member causes him to acknowledge the role of the school in his life, it, as a meta-identity becomes a present and contentious factor in group life ultimately leading to group disintegration.

Positioning as the Adoption of Style.

Unlike many other fields of endeavour, but like many other creative/craft endeavours, theatrical activity is characterised by a heightened desire to participate in the activity for its own sake, the yearning I referred to in the previous section. The effect of this is that the legitimacy claims attempt to safeguard both a space in which expression can occur and a resource base. Since theatre is in the main a participatory, labour-intensive activity, the need to establish and maintain a physical space and to maintain a pool of affordable labour to support the activity means effectively that a struggle for resources is endemic. Moreover, it is not a field that is considered 'essential' as a human resource in most cultures including Western. Thus, the maintenance and enhancement of these resources necessitates a correspondingly keen maintenance of legitimacy claims.

Such claims inevitably relate the desire for expression to both ideological outlooks and fashionable entitlements. Existing forms and styles provide authority for the work. In the Adelaide case under consideration, styles and ideological stances in the work of the Nimrod Theatre Company in Sydney and the Australian Performing Group in Melbourne during the seventies can be seen echoed in two companies that preceded those under consideration in the first half of the nineties case studies, namely Troupe and The Stage Company. Troupe and The Stage Company began after Nimrod and the APG but were for a period contemporaneous with them and, alongside the ideological support of Adelaide theatre training institutions and academics, in turn laid an active basis for legitimising much of the work of the first half of the nineties in Adelaide.

A welter of other activity and companies existed alongside Troupe and The Stage Company together with a burgeoning of communication amongst companies. This activity included, both in South Australia and nationally, a vigorous growth of theatre-in-education companies, community theatre companies, children's' theatre, circus and so on. Beside these, theatre

and drama academies proliferated along with drama festivals, conferences and an energetic interaction of practitioners from state to state. This sudden discharge of activity supported and reinforced the changing nature of the space of theatrical ideas. Out of this activity nationally, particular companies at state level and the Nimrod and APG nationally tended to supply a kind of short hand for the broader ideational scene.

The Nimrod and the APG and their many prominent associated personalities carried sufficient public authority by the early to mid seventies to influence the shape of theatrical events beyond their immediate geo-polities and the direction of activity beyond the lifetimes of the theatre companies themselves. In this way, these major companies of the sixties to eighties provided an underlying conceptual framework and a detailed stylistic panoply for similar Australian work. The work of Troupe and The Stage Company (though for a significant period, contemporary) evoked the earlier work by the APG and Nimrod respectively but the relationship was not one of emulation. Rather the similarities had to do with the way in which these companies came to adopt certain styles of making theatre. They wanted to express the ethos of the times as they saw it.

The release of activity in this period produced elasticity in the space of ideas through an exercise of new ideas – or reshaping of old ideas – at the vanguard of which were the Nimrod and the APG. Troupe and The Stage Company readily took up this mantle in SA. In turn, their work and other activities in the areas of community theatre and theatre-in-education of the time created an expectation within the space of ideas leading to the configuration observable in the first half of the nineties. Additionally, the nature of theatrical activity elsewhere (prompted by similar events and activities) reinforced these niches in the ideational space informing, shaping and inspiring the choices of new companies in Adelaide and providing where necessary points of reference to explain their activity.

This activity, with its various brighter lights, had effectively altered the field of theatre production and in particular, as I will illustrate engaging the work of Pierre Bourdieu, its determinant: the space of possible ideas. Bourdieu is interested in cultural production because it manufactures artefacts including books, theatre productions, use of quotation and citation[111], architectural design and jewellery. By the selective use of artefacts like these, individuals and groups distinguish their class and power settings from others.

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[111] Op. cit., Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production,* p 138.

> *The principles of 'selection' objectively employed by the different groups of producers competing for cultural legitimacy are always defined within a system of social relations obeying a specific logic. The available symbolic position-takings are, moreover, functions of the interest-systems objectively attached to the positions producers occupy in special power relations, which are the social relations of symbolic production, circulation and consumption.*[112]

Central to the argument in this pair of sentences is the linkage of social relations and symbolic production (by this Bourdieu means symbol manufacture). The imperative of occupying and maintaining position links them. Bourdieu emphasises that cultural capital is about the legitimation of positions. Outward sign bolsters the relationships of power by denoting membership in networks that share the determining ideas. Position taking is therefore as much an act involving the adoption of style, as it is an act involving the manipulation of power. The signs that define each position denote their relative power. In this way, the production of signs, symbolic production, interconnects with power relations through positions demarcated by style.

In reconsidering the reasons given for the emergence of the Sumerian civilisation as conjectured by Gordon Childe in 1942, Norbert Elias demonstrates this effect. According to Elias, Childe reasoned that food surpluses enabled the existence of managerial classes of various kinds (priests, warlords and others).[113] His reconsideration rejects such causal explanations and replaces them with "a process-type explanation".[114] There had to be coercion operating along with the agricultural ability to produce a surplus. The process for him is 'figurational':

> *Humanity is simply another word for the totality of human societies, for the ongoing process of the figuration which all the various survival units form with each other, whether they have the character of kinship groups, tribes, or states.*[115]

Within this configuration and around this act of coercion, Elias's sense of process includes an act of legitimation accompanying an act of intimidation. You must do as we say or the Gods will destroy you,

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112 Ibid., p 140.

113 Elias, Norbert, "The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present" in *Norbert Elias and Figurational Sociology*, *Theory, Culture and Society, Explorations in Critical Social Science*, Vol. 4, Nos. 2-3, June, 1987, p 239.

114 Ibid., p 241.

115 Ibid., p 244.

intimidation, and it is right that you should do so because this is on the authority of the Gods, legitimation. Accompanying these – and not succeeding it – are the habiliments of special 'knowledge', the accompanying, not succeeding, style. These habiliments are the dress and other badgings of the priesthood, those ritual acts and investitures that illustrate the rule of Gods within the configuration that the banner and the sword of the warrior at once represent and protect. That is, the ideological justifications and the style in which they are couched go hand in hand and are sometimes inseparable within a space of possible ideas, which, for Elias, is a configuration of survival groups. The pronouncement of a God and the rhetorical form in which it is couched are prized apart with difficulty and the distinguishing features of the king's sword or the uniform features of his warrior's armaments are all but inseparable from their actions.

So, position taking is as much an act of adopting style as a substantive action in itself. Let's test this with an extreme example. Is an invasion an adoption of style? 'Precision strikes' are style. That may require some unpacking as the term for some will seem purely technical and for others drastically euphemistic. That there can be such alternate views of the descriptor adopted by the US to describe bombing employed in two attacks on Iraq mirrors the vast disagreement about the action. The word 'technical', for example, while appearing to denote objectivity, i.e. a stance outside opinion and within 'reality', is in fact only a reality within a particular construct describing one set of life environments and is therefore ideological. This gives rise to the capacity to view the same term in such a completely different way. Each description, 'technical' or 'euphemistic', is rhetorical and rhetoric that couches ideological justifications is a stylistic form.

Might there have been a time when an invasion did not need to be legitimised and so ideology and style were absent? Might the legitimation have simply been cruder, the uncouth display of might being 'right'? Such a distinction constitutes an extreme arranged near one end in a field of available ideas; uncouth to one culture is admired practice to another. The field is a spectrum of styles from the 'crude' to the 'refined' perhaps, but styles none the less.

In emphasising the legitimating role of the symbols of position, Bourdieu states that they are a function of "interest-systems"[116]. The symbol, in its integral link with social relations, is simultaneously integrated with power, systems of interest, influence and control. That brings us back to Bourdieu's "principles of selection". Producers will select the artefacts they produce according to these interest systems and the positions they

may thus be enabled to occupy. These principles, as Bourdieu puts it, are "defined within a system of social relations"[117]. Ideas allowable within the logic of the system, ideas that in turn determine possible action, define the system. It is the ideas relevant to the position-taking that matter; it is the availability of the ideas and their accessibility according to the alliances producers have available to use them. The space of ideas will contain their (and, let it be remembered, our) 'selection'.

In summary, any configuration of activity will imply interest systems, as Bourdieu terms them. Amongst theatre companies there will be competition to occupy available niches and it is the style that is adopted representing the ideological claim for legitimacy of the company that will carry the burden of success or otherwise. The style is the point of interaction between the patronage and the company. It is the connecting point for the legitimating feedback loop through which the tests of communicative action occur that determines not only the success or failure of legitimacy strategies but also the fine-tuning of programming and the general approach over time of the company. Amongst those claims, excellence is used as a higher order claim and exemplifies a mechanism of ideological claim that we will deal with later where the attempt is to submerge such claims beneath attack making them a part of the 'commonsense' of life processes. Naturally, excellence and claims like it are ill defined tending to connote style rather than any specific practice that would be more objectively excellent than another would[118].

In the next chapter, this configuration of activity supported by stylistic projection of ideological claim is returned to the context of group/individual interdependence. Here, I will discuss the simple structure of the group and how individuals are placed within it. I will use the second identity fable to illustrate the disruption to group cohesion that can occur through the process of an individual's choice to make a new identification and pursue it. We will observe reactions to this action and the effect on group resilience. Whereas *Chelsea* demonstrated the possible cost of exclusion for an individual, *The Story of Larry and Ben* will illustrate the dissolution of a group resulting from the identification desires of a central member confronting the rigidity of the group's legitimacy claims. We will observe how the resilience of the group as opposed to its individual members may be affected by individual action and how its power may become the source of its vulnerability. The fable further illustrates the interdependence of group and individual and explicates the nature of the bonds and the

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116 Op. cit., Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, p140.

117 Ibid.

118 Stances with regard to training, rehearsal practices and professional attitudes are implied by the idea of excellence.

maintenance required whether the group be the playground group of the fable or a theatre company.

Chapter 8. The Indissoluble Circle: Position, Groups and Selfhood.

In this chapter, I consider the sites of intersubjective agreement in groups and meta-identities within the space of possible ideas. An identity fable, *The Story of Larry and Ben*, introduces a discussion of group structure. The section considers the relationship of group centres and their rims, destabilising tensions and actions that maintain legitimacy. A diagram of this group structure also introduces a diagrammatic of groups in which we can observe a schematic rendering of the space of possible ideas.

I will also explain the nature of the space of possible ideas in this chapter. We have discussed to this point the nature of positional claims, their ideological basis and their characterisation, carriage and illumination by style. The space of possible ideas determines the availability of ideological messages from which a position can be chosen, attained and defended.

Positioning and Groups

Each individual's moment to moment response to the group behaviour of contingent others is determined by attempts to establish positions in relation to those others. Thus, the automatic, often unconscious, realm of action is the realm of positioning action, of launching and defending claims, of determining and maintaining alliances and so on. Where alliances form there is a consciousness of demarcation between contingent others who 'belong' and those who don't. One set of contingencies forms a group. If that group is 'sought after' for belonging, those who don't 'belong' either form a different group or are treated as a separate, often derogatory, 'group' identity whether they like it or not.

Groups will define themselves in contradistinction to others with whom they are contingent, as we have seen in the Adelaide case study. This defining process is general. Rival gangs are a classic example where identity is deeply associated with territorial contention, exhibits high emotional arousal and manifests itself in demarcations of style and ideology. By contrast, other groups within the same territory as a playground gang at school may be simply irrelevant to them, like spatially co-existing species, a bird with a small mammal for example, their area of contingency merely coincidental, clashing only at incidental margins over matters like the availability of a classroom, for instance, or for a teacher's attention.

Above these fields of contingent groups are their meta-identities. For example, the school itself brings together the playground groups under an 'education' meta-identity. The school assembly is a ritual moment regularly asserting the meta-identity. It combines larger containing allegiances including the school itself, the authorities that contain it and the dominant ideas informing the immediate practice and goals of education. For individuals within the school, the meta-identity provides an identity pathway for the formation of individual and group identities and the school assembly is a simulacrum of that.

There is a sense of irrelevance about the assembly for some of the playground groups. For other groups and for individuals conscious of their mobility from group to group the assembly may represent aspiration to a 'higher' group, one closer to the centre of dominant ideas. The fable of identity, *The Story of Larry and Ben* (see on page 138) exhibits a tension between these levels and resulting intra-group tension.

Again, small professional theatre companies are another arrangement of groups existing within a geo-polity, a site of contingent activities and contingent dependencies like those of the playground groups and their overarching dependencies. Though the 'real' relating may appear to be happening in the playground, meta-identity decisions arising from the geo-polity, affect what happens in these separate fields. For the small professional theatre companies these include funding decisions by government, the market for the theatre product and the associations that exist for the companies' or their workers' welfare.

Within each field of activity, a group occupies or contends for a dominant position. This may be a state theatre company or a 'popular group' in the playground. Meanwhile other groups distribute themselves in relation to the dominant according to available legitimising ideas that will have influence over like-minded areas of patronage. Some will adopt such positions from the outset because the idea that the work in this niche represents, is the idea with which an individual's self-expression feels most compatible. This is where their contribution makes most sense and where their energy and sympathy for the style available reaches an optimum intensity. In the case study of Adelaide theatre companies, the collective of the Red Shed Theatre company best represents this phenomenon. At the Red Shed, collective membership was embraced with a belief in the values and ideology represented along with the work and governance styles adopted and a sense of congruence amongst these statements and consequent practices.

Dominating groups will have contact with, and understanding of, those in the ruling positions in other fields of activity. At this level, direct personal

and group contact and the media that represents and 'binds' them (advertising, magazines, net sites, etc) will generate stylistic consistency and so demarcate the ruling style in each field of activity. Money and power will secure the position and continually shape the style that defines the position. The style contains a referent power and constancy of reference that associates the dominant forms with the dominant position. In this way, the style represents the ideology that legitimates the position. Thus, ideology is suffused in style without the necessity for reiteration and further legitimation of its basic tenets. All other positions will demarcate in contradistinction to this according to available ideas within the space of possible Ideas.

The Story of Larry and Ben – an Identity Fable.

The Story of Larry and Ben[119] (see a scenario of the play in Appendix 1) is a group-devised drama developed with a group of 14-15yr old young people. The project began as a means to explore boys' culture. Ultimately, the focus became the tensions between selfhood and group membership.

Larry and Ben are in a struggle with each other that turns on definitions of their individual identities in relation to the group and the legitimacy of the group itself. They are both central figures in their 'popular group' so that their thinking is crucial to group legitimacy. Ben wants to enforce the rule of the group. Larry wants to test an identification for himself beyond it. Richard is representative of other group members who occupy identities out to the rim of the group.

Larry knows that it will not be possible for him to belong in the group and to pursue serious desires with the school itself. One aspect of the group ideology is rejection of academic seriousness in any form. Its style is physical, arrogant and disdainful of schooling. For the group, Larry's desire is testing and he himself recalcitrant. For Ben, Larry's recalcitrance threatens the meaning of the group itself and so his (Ben's) own identity. For group cohesion, Ben senses that ideological rigidity is essential and Larry kinda knows that's how it will be.

The school is the meta-identity of the picture; it defines the constraints around the group, and delimits the field in which the group forms its rules and behaviour. Though the group is oppositional, it is the school and its

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119 Fry, Garry. *The Story of Larry and Ben*. A replay, group devised drama project developed for the Bungee High School Drama Program of the Belconnen Community Service, 2005. Scenario developed by David Temme and Andrew Lovering.

identifying world that determines it. It is through the school that alternative, striving identification can be sought. The boys' group occupies a niche in the space of possible ideas that is loud and insistent but actually quite marginal within the meta-identity. For this group and its members to succeed at some stage it and/or each of them is likely to have to accommodate to the school itself. Such an accommodation could take the whole group with it. In fact, the group who worked on this project did just that. As time went on, they opted in their varying ways to embrace the aspirations the school embodied while retaining their friendship ties. The group survived the accommodation. In the story of the play, it does not.

As a central member of the group, Larry has confidence in himself and his adeptness in embodying the style that the group uses to represent its meaning. Though the Ag Teacher's offer (to speak to new students at a school assembly about the garden plot) represents an important pathway for him, he has a struggle to take it on. His belief in himself and his ability to respond to challenge notwithstanding the possible rejection by the grouping in doing so, demonstrate his resilience.

So powerful in fact is that resilience that it has a charisma about it that ensures ultimately the rejection of his friend and co-leader, Ben. Is it hypocrisy in Richard to reject Ben? Or is it the emotional pathway the group will go down to reconcile its relative displacement from the meta-identity, the school itself?

Ben and Larry cannot solve their difference in a way that preserves the group. The group is destroyed. It does not have a mechanism to transform itself. All it has is Ben's rigidity of purpose with nowhere else for him to turn. To turn around, to bend back on himself and discover a way of reinventing his state of being to allow for this changed fact at the centre of the group, Larry's evolving selfhood, proves a task he cannot even imagine.

Centres and Rims

Via the work of Mary Douglas on 'thoughtful institutions'[120] I want now to use Ludwik Fleck's idea of thought collectives to build a general and simple picture of a common tendency in group structure. Groups have centres and rims. At the centre the ideas defining the collective are produced and at the rim the conventionality of their application is apparent. Thought collectives are also the sites of identity maintenance. The

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120 Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*. Routledge and Kegan, Paul, 1987.

collectives overlap and operate within others giving rise to paradoxes and conflicts of thought, action and identity.

As we have seen in this description of the boys' popular group so we will later see with respect to both the APG and the Nimrod that in their differing ways, a hierarchical arrangement exists composed in Fleck's conception of circles surrounding an inner circle, the 'centre'.[121] The popular group tends to be a large entity and others exist around it at varying degrees of exclusion or uninterest (see figure page 142). In the figure, I have depicted it as intersecting and yet its shading indicates that it either has, or is depicted as having, a differing style, one that excludes it from membership of the prevailing, i.e. the popular, group.

As with the example of *The Story of Larry and Ben*, one could characterise as 'schoolyard' the field of which these two depicted entities are a part. This field includes the corridors and that part of classroom activity that is connected by schoolyard positioning activity. In other words, the space in which this schoolyard activity occurs is in the first instance an enforced physical space. The physical space is the space in which this social expression occurs, which then takes over, overlaying a field of cultural action. Simultaneously, ideas about that action prompt the content of the expression as well as determining the appropriate and representative style of the action.

Teaching and learning while effectively determining the field, are only distantly connected to the schoolyard field and much of the connection is by way of disapprobation or approbation of styles adopted in relation to this enforced, often remote meta-identity. However, in the field, some groups will be much more closely connected to teaching and learning. They will derive their claim for position from that contiguity to these overt purposes of the school and their style will be fashioned to agree and harmonise with them thus maximising the benefits of membership and alliance with other associated groups.

Contrarily the intersection in the diagram below is between two groups for whom teaching and learning are peripheral at best. Intersection by the smaller group indicates that it is composed of desires for identification with the popular group but lacks sufficient harmony with either the popular group's values or its styles of presentation to make the transition or to be included. A group with such a desire is likely to have a much less coherent centre. In a sense, its centre is more appropriately the centre of the dominant or popular group, it having difficulty forming distinctive styles

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121 This could have been depicted using a social network diagram a la social network theory. As with other theories presented here for their interlocking capacity, I have had to simplify each in order to satisfy the need to present the interlocked whole.

of action in contra-distinction to it. Even so, its enforced relatively marginalised placement forces it to have some kind of centre. The alternative would be the individual isolation of each of its individuals and consequent threat to the identity of each.

An emphasis to be made is that the existence of an aspirant group indicates either or both a lack of idea-positions or else there are dominant ideological inhibitions against taking them. Another possibility, that is a lack of creative imagination applied to imagining and then individually forging a space is itself hampered by the narrowing of the space of possible ideas. In other words, it may not be possible to realise the possibilities of imagination since (and aside from our dependence on ideas to build further ideas) the question in this case is whether such independent and imaginative options deliver resilience and are sustainable.

In the APG/Nimrod example, this marginally placed group will represent a contrary orientation with distinct centre. Rather than remaining in the shadow of the dominant and dupe of the dominant group's unrelenting practice of power and control, it could be substantially challenging to the dominant. It is that awareness of this range of possibility in the marginal group from dupe to potential prevailing force that motivates the dominant group to practice and sharpen its in- and ex- clusive controlling manipulative skills.

It is noticeable that the independent imagination option above is taken very seriously in the arts. As Maria Shevtsova notes in passing in her "Outside in ..." article for Australasian Drama Studies and referring to community theatre works based on interview with refugees and depicting their circumstances:

> *The existence of these works suggests that community theatre in Australia, for which there has been little financial, moral and other support in recent years [writing in 2004], is finding its voice again...*

Fringe activities in theatre such as community theatre are presented with considerable inhibitions. The inhibitions often make the choice of such activity difficult and, when chosen, the required resilience and thus the sustainability are questionable. Shevtsova's comment, though intended as hopeful for the work, does not recognise this question here.

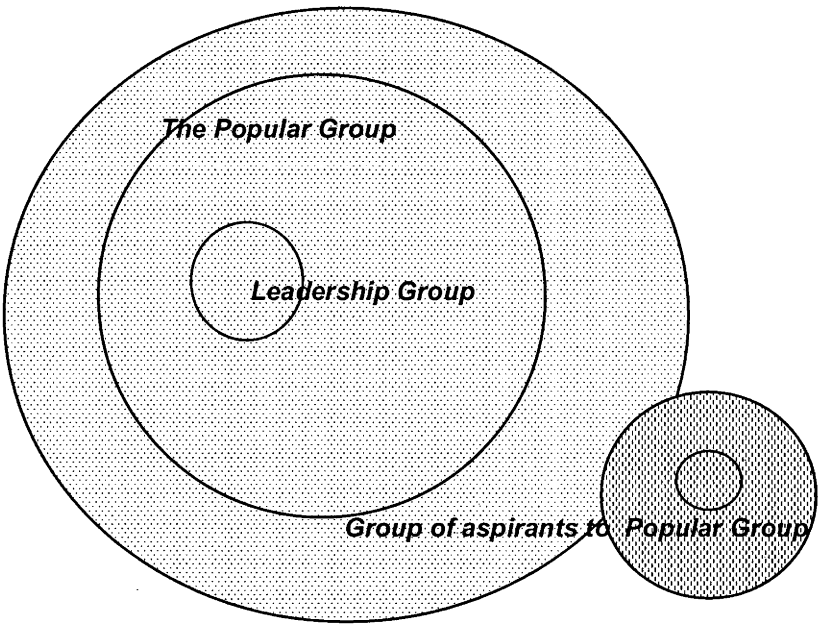

Figure 5 **Centres and Rims**

I have depicted the centre as off-centre since the nature of the balance between in- and ex- clusion means that some members of the group will be deliberately cast as in danger of exclusion at all times. This will vary and there will be naturally a wobble of position around this mechanism. Nevertheless, the need to maximise techniques for maintaining the group from the centre will ensure that the possibility of defaming or demonising members of the group by reference to group values will persist. For the popular group, the smaller group stands as an example of derisory style. For members of the popular group itself, it is a reminder that this defaming tactic could be turned on them. The derided group is a repository for those who are excluded but not lost and who maintain or cannot relinquish a desire to identify with the larger group.

Groups who are out of this picture, like those alluded to above who may be more associated with claims to learning will thereby lack the need to identify with this group but are still available to it for ignoring, lampooning and deriding. These mechanics of position comprise, in effect, whatever it takes to de-legitimise a claim to any position that may be seen to conflict with that of the popular or any dominant group. However, the more remote groups are, the less the object of these tactics. The tactics focus on internal group cohesion and other groups are more often exemplars of incorrect style rather than territorial competition. Strong, cohesive, coherent groups are more likely to manage territorial competition well.

The ideas of an unconnected group are substantially different from the popular group and produce, within the range offered by the field, that is this range of possible ideas, correspondingly different styles. These styles

are not compatible and occupy different aspects of the expressive niches available in the field. Therefore, it is only where the expression substantially overlaps that the claim tussles appear. Otherwise, the schoolyard would be as peaceful as the co-existing birds in the garden, each with their different 'shopping lists'. Within the flock, the shopping style is strictly monitored.

The legitimating ideas form a system of thought. The system is composed of values, favoured achievements, notions of conduct and a sense of what comprises flair. It also contains notions of what may be transgressions against values or 'goofs' that transgress the commonsense that group members infer from the system. The group strives to maintain the coherence of this system and one function of group cultural action is to define this system and its facets continually.

Here the determining power of the centre is paramount. Clearly, the centre itself forms a kind of group within a group protecting its hold on this defining power that determines the form of expression. Continual acts of definition operate at the contiguity of surfaces, which is at the point of interaction between the actions and reactions of overt behaviour. The coherence or clumsiness of operation at these surfaces comes down to flair or adroitness of style. The centre must be highly skilled at the appropriate style and at sensing what displays it. An attack on the centre is an attack on definition. Attack goes to the ideological basis of the legitimacy claim and registers as the parody of, or contempt for, style.

The Space of Possible Ideas.

The space of possible ideas is a finite bubble growing and contracting according to the power of the centre as opposed to the power of contention away from the centre and towards the fringe. Those of the centre that determine the ruling ideology of the space and so its style will attempt to place these ruling ideas at the inviolable level of commonsense (see on page 242). At this level, an assertion is beyond question because it is commonsense.

Bourdieu, in applying the idea of 'position' to the field of cultural production, was concerned to separate the artist from the mystique and to have art works squarely understood as relative to the possible positions that could be or are occupied by other works of art.[122]

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122 Op. cit., Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p 34ff.

> *When we speak of a field of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a system for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus ... but the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or, to put it another way, that the generative, unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders ...*[123]

The positions adopted in this relativity are contested within a 'space of possibles'[124]. The space of possibles is a set of strategic relationships that can be viewed from any actual or potential position and that change as those other positions relative to it, and which delimit it, themselves shift. I have taken up Bourdieu's idea in this study but in an altered form. To determine and defend position, an ideology supporting the position is adopted at some level whether that be overtly polemical or covertly commonsensical. Thus, I have preferred to use the notion of an ideational space, a space of possible ideas derived in this way from Bourdieu's concept.

Within this space of possible ideas, there are some ideas we know and understand and they form the basis of our associations and groups, our institutions and work patterns. We know these intimately, sometimes irritably and always familiarly. Other ideas in the space are dim and mostly misunderstood. Those can seem as hateful and repugnant as they are distant and alien. Others loom above locked in a dimension for which most of us have neither key nor code. These are ruling ideas and it is from them that our familiarities and our most rigid rules of commonsense subtend.

Whorls of activity obeying, reacting to or demarcating from, the centres out of which defining styles emanate, characterise activity in the space of possible ideas. These centres manage style according to a mechanics of innovation, such as car models or fashion statements or theatre reviews. In turn, these mechanics of innovation and fashion are constrained by the position held by this centre of activity within the space of possible ideas.

Individuals who do not obey the style or who fashion it less elegantly find themselves locked in a centrifugal plunge away from the centres. These souls find themselves forced into outer bands or into other whorls into which they have almost no ingress even if these are seen to be stratigraphically at a same or lesser height as the one in which they hold so tenuous a position. They may coalesce with others similarly outcast

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123 Ibid., p 34.

124 Ibid., p 30.

having a sense that this group so formed is somehow 'false', the new placement simply a social representation of the primary displacement or alienation.

Again, there will be groups and organisations that never belonged near the centre but borrow from it and adapt styles that create niches legitimised by a borrowing from the centre. A line of clothing that imitates the expensive brand may be an example or a theatre company that mimics the style or programming of major companies. Similarly, niches can be created that reflect different and opposing ideas to that of the centre. Always the space of possible ideas provides an array of possibilities for niches and demonstrates, especially through the example of the ruling ideas but also by subterranean notions of commonsense, what may or may not be available as a niche. So that in one culture the presentation of art works that deride a race or religion may be acceptable but in another, it will be blasphemy. The so-called 'culture wars' in Australia during the late nineties and early 2000s are an example of a struggle to delimit the niches available in a space of possible ideas.

In the next part, I will describe a change in the space of possible ideas that influenced the shape of theatre in the Adelaide of the first half of the nineties. At that point, I will return to the space of possible ideas and outline how it appears to work in the light of this change. I will now briefly present an abstract, graphic representation of it based on the conception of groups presented in this chapter.

With reference to Figure 6 below, I have based this representation on the depiction of groups showing centres and rims in Figure 5 (see on page 142). The space is a field delineated by the ideologies and possibilities of its present groups and players. It intersects with other spaces. These intersections are not represented here. Obviously, ideas from other spaces may be adapted for use in any other. This will take imagination, technical change and categorical replicability (e.g. an idea from biology may be hard if not impossible to replicate in auto sales).

The space as presented is in a kind of stasis. In the next part, I will present it in transformation. In the diagram, I have depicted each group as I will subsequently present them as theatre companies though they could be understood as groups in a school playground or used car firms on Sydney's Parramatta Road – notably within a definable physical space since the space of possible ideas broadly tracks and defines geographical space. Each group occupies space according to the above notion of an organisation with a centre and a rim and is therefore of fuzzy social outline though the institutional framework is economically and legally delimited.

The space of possible ideas is definitely not a mapping of individual life environments. Rather, if it could be mapped it would cancel out individual ideas except insofar as they were relevant to group ideas or had currency as available and allowable ideas. In this sense, the space cannot map selfhood except in those rare cases where the selfhoods of individuals occupy the centre of the thought collectives. Even then, the constraints are manifold. Effectively the space maps the ideas available that define groups, provide ideological positions and with regard to individuals, it maps the opportunities for identification and thus conferred identity.

The conceptual span of the present delimits the space of possible ideas. What can be used is determined by a set of 'allowable' concepts. The notion of 'allowable' can be understood by returning to the group nature of these phenomena. Since the operation of groups determines the space and since groups must establish legitimate identity in order to claim expressive space, then the concepts they are able to work with are only those that are consistent with their identity and the styles of action that dictates.

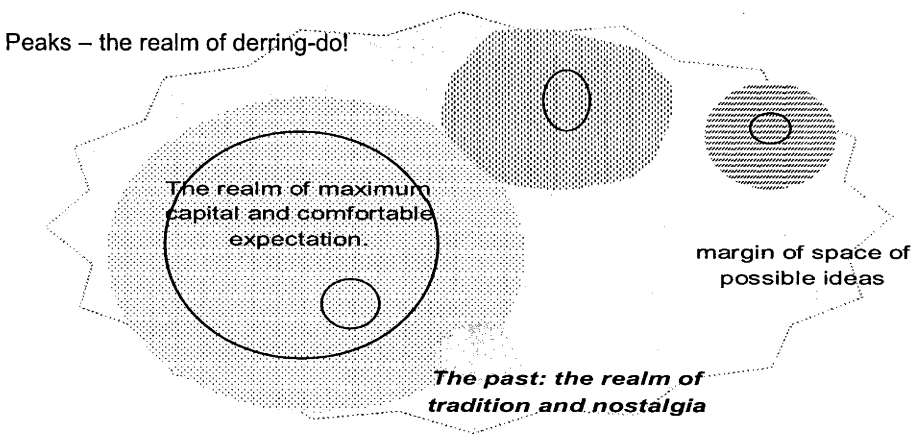

Figure 6 The constellation as a simple representation of realms and groups occupying the space of possible ideas showing centres, rims and differing styles.

The space has three broad categories, the largest of which is that occupied by the hegemonic group, 'realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation' though this one is not alone in occupying the largest area of the space. The outer area of peaks and more marginal

groups is the 'realm of derring-do'[125]. The third is the past, the 'realm of tradition and nostalgia' to which I will return shortly. In the school playground example and in most schools, the larger groups are likely to be those more closely associated with the meta-identity of the school itself. Smaller secure groups will still have this association combined with special interests that marginalise them somewhat. There will be oppositional groups such as that of Ben's and Larry's that operate much more marginally and run the risk of annihilation.

The margin of the space, though vague, is not smooth but has peaks, ideas that seem to reach out into an unknown. These peaks of ideas are not unconnected islands for they grow from the space of possible ideas; they do not exist outside it. They represent also our sense of the future, of where our imagination wants our expression to go. Often we repudiate these testing forms and sometimes we yearn for them. Larry's speech to the assembly attests to this.

The 'future' is a realm of speculative possibles, delightfully or morbidly extrapolated from assessments of an interpreted present defined by the conceptually possible. Obviously, it cannot be the actual future realised in the present. These ideas, which the peaks in the margin of the diagram represent, are forays into construction of speculated, dreamt and even feared futures.

These ideas in formation (or reformation in as much as they re-form ideas in currency) are arranged, as are ideas about the past, for our present purposes. Neither the past nor any imagined future exists for any other purpose in our present activity than as an aspect of the ideological superstructure supporting it. Like the past, the future has its own traditions attached to it from Utopian hope to versions of Armageddon. Practically, these ideas are drawn upon for legitimation often symbolically pictured, like the many versions of Utopia and Armageddon.

However, rather than the maintenance of a present stasis, the activity around future ideas are indicated in the peaks as a kind of 'realm of derring-do' where much is dared and new positions are formed, tested and claimed. This realm of peaks or forays into unknown combinations of presently available ideas represents a realm of possible ideas concerned with meaning, form, process or combinations of these. We perceive the concepts that inform the work of companies in this realm as 'new', 'avant-garde', 'challenging' and so on. We rarely see them as comfortable.

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[125] I could have opted for more formal terms such as Raymond Williams' terms, 'emergent' for the 'realm of derring-do' or 'residual for the 'realm of tradition and nostalgia'. However, emergent isn't quite right as it lacks the connotations of ephemerality and impulse and it is definitely not as much fun! Similar arguments apply to other terms.

Those groups and in my foremost example, theatre companies, that exist in an area closer to the speculative future are by definition operating within a realm of reduced pragmatism and so cannot expect to gain maximum capital. Without providing comfort, their chances of growing and occupying a 'realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation' rather than the insubstantial and uncertain areas of the margins are very small. Moreover, they are likely to become familiar and so contempt will lose for them that compensatory quality for loss of capital: their sense of adventure, of derring-do! Naturally, they will work within the limited area of possibles available to them, taxing their imagination in the effort to remain interesting within this rarefied realm. Inexorably as the work they do becomes more understood and passes into the wider currency of culture it either becomes of greater comfortable expectation and thus challenges the centre of capital, some other more secure niche or it becomes of little note and passes out of possibility. A smaller company like this may simply float through the space becoming consequently predictable and ending up outside the space of possible ideas, which is precisely nowhere.

Alternatively, a happier ending, it may attract a residual nostalgic value. Unless the concepts it represents have either successfully challenged the middle ground or affected the operations of the middle ground, it will not remain long in that 'realm of tradition and nostalgia' where we choose to save ideas from slipping into the oblivion of the forgotten past. Another fate is to pass out of existence as a current entity but to remain as a name or mode becoming a possible idea in itself, an expressive concept of symbolic and legitimating power. Many great theatre companies and practitioners of the past are exemplary of this status such as Brecht and the Berliner Ensemble. In this story, both the Nimrod and the APG continued for some time after their demise as legends with this legitimating power.

Off centre is an area I have called the past, which is a kind of 'library' from which ideas may be borrowed and reused or reshaped. However, we may also think of it as where ideas are lost, a hole into which ideas can fall. The story of the renaissance still resonates in our present thinking. Though a humanist story, it is also a story of great reverence for, and reliance on, the rediscovered or borrowed ideas of a past time. In this way, it is very different to the parody Bourdieu describes us as applying to the vanquished ideas of the recent past in order to demonstrate our progress. How we arrange the past depends on how we wish to employ it in our establishment of legitimacy in the present.

'The past', oblivion for many forms, ideas and styles is also a realm of ideas that belongs in the space of possible ideas. It can be a realm of tradition and nostalgia, a rosy-spectacled region, where past companies

and players exist in a kind of hall of honour as they fade from view. To an extent it is this, a realm of unassailable symbols appropriated to legitimate a present pursuit. Yet, it is also very assailable as the under-formed, naïve and unpolished version of the present achievement available for parody and benign contempt. As a repository of theatrical ideas - possibles – the past is also plundered for likely vehicles for the transmission of new and/or difficult concepts or for works of tradition and nostalgia, which might provide comfort itself and so maintain capital inflow.

This abstract depiction represents one moment within a period of what might be styled relatively smooth cultural transformation. There is incipient contention from one entity against the dominant style but in this depiction that second entity is satisfied with its position and not threatening the dominant. Though aspects of the dominant style flirt dangerously with the past as depicted by proximity, and so may be styled 'passé' or outmoded, the general outlook is stable. The contending entities have sufficient hold on space to be relatively stable themselves, and the dominant form is likely to be close enough to them - or at least one of them - to assimilate aspects of the style to satisfy that edge of its clientele that may head off if modernising does not occur at all. To momentarily go forward in my story, this configuration describes the circumstances in Melbourne or Sydney after both the Nimrod and the APG had gone. By that time, the Sydney and Melbourne Theatre Companies occupied the dominant space and the Belvoir and Playbox occupied the second respectively.

A redrawing of this space to suit the scene we have observed in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties would draw the dominant company, the STCSA, much larger with four smaller groups occupying positions closer to the margin. Part of the reason for this is that the special interest nature of each of these groups always allows room for a generalist player like the Stage Company of the eighties to occupy that position or for the flagship company itself to move into it. The latter effectively happens by virtue of STCSA productions of a less 'comfortable' kind designated for the Space theatre where the Stage Company mostly worked.

Social Drama

Not all cultural transformations are smooth and many lead to social dramas (not to be confused with theatrical dramas). Victor Turner describes social dramas as "units of aharmonic or disharmonic social

process, arising in conflict situations"[126]. He uses these units to describe and analyse outbreaks of social conflict. In his book *Ritual to Theatre*, he speaks of social life as being "pregnant"[127] with them. Theatre then is a compelling metaphor for Turner while being a liminoid space itself. He identifies four stages in his social drama model beginning with breach and proceeding through crisis to "legal or ritual means of redress or reconciliation" resulting in "either the public and symbolic expression of reconciliation or else of irremediable schism"[128].

On a broad scale, Turner's social drama is about a disconnection that grows to a conflict broadening into a social schism requiring redressive measures to return to a new harmony or an acknowledgement of, and accommodation to, continuing schism. The desire to attain position can result in conflict, breach and resistance leading to a social drama that alters the field or with which the field must deal by redressing or re-mediating the insurrection or breach of order.

Social crisis, Turner explains, may not be redressed; it may descend into insurrection, civil disjunction and even civil war. Such events have not responded to the redressive and restorative means available to the culture. Change will, and profound change may very well, result, bringing with it the invention of new means of jural resolution and a host of symbols and legends from the crisis itself that renew the symbolic language of the culture.

Out of this maelstrom, new modes and systems of conception that have resulted from the crisis reframe the great works. Short of this massive change, Turner states, are social forces straining towards enactment of the social drama. For the drama is completed by successful redress and

> *... reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between, the contending parties.*[129]

Between these two poles reintegration and irreparable schism, lies the probability that the existing configuration of ideas and powers has fundamentally changed. Change may well have brought with it disturbance of what has been social 'commonsense' and a shift may well have occurred in the way the quotidian has to be understood and

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126 Turner, Victor, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society; Cornell University Press; 1974, p 63.

127 Turner, Victor W., *From Ritual to Theatre*. PAJ Publications, 1982, p 11.

128 Op. cit., Turner, Victor, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society, pp 78-79.

129 Turner, Victor, *The Anthropology of Performance*. PAJ Publications, 1988, p 35.

negotiated. Though redressive action occurring between these poles avoids the massive change of revolution, it may well bring with it irreversible change.

When such changes occur, an education of perception (see on page 230) will be an outcome of individual intercourse within the culture since individuals will be interacting with changed terms of engagement. Their loci of identity formation will have altered and even the locus of the liminal will have shifted. What was marginal may be less so and the liminoid, the ritual point, the reflexive moment changes its character.

In Larry's and Ben's story, for example, the group definition broke down under pressure from an identification choice of a core member and the rigidity and therefore vulnerability of the group ideology. In its microcosmic way, the story illustrates the breakdown groups under pressure from stimuli with which they are not equipped to cope and a concomitant alteration of their locus of identity formation. The story shows the milieu of the boys as moving from one moment of relative stasis into a new moment requiring multiple repositions and the re-formation of the space of possible ideas.

The post-colonial is a race and nation-wide exemplar of the same phenomenon. In an intense way, this was experienced across Africa. In a gentler manner, Australia also experienced the post-colonial and the education of perception that resulted is part of the story before us. The story involves the shifting of the liminoid space. This new outlook meant a change in the ideologies that informed the concepts used to frame experience. It shifted the nature of the ideas that styled group bonding and the resulting fashions of action and thought conferred the means by which positions could be fastened in the altered cultural configuration.

The next part takes as its focus this broad shift in the liminoid space that had the character of a social drama as Turner describes it. I will begin by sketching the prevailing circumstances that led to what was a significant break with an established aesthetic that existed before the late sixties. Much of that established aesthetic will be seen as echoing the world of Adelaide theatre well before the period described in Chapter Six. Thus, the chapter lays the groundwork for the discussion of the major change in the space of possible ideas that occurred during the late sixties and seventies in Australia and that was led by the Nimrod the APG. In this coverage, I will also focus on how this change in the space of possible ideas integrally involved the ritual purpose of theatre. In describing it we will see how this change was necessitated by the redressive actions societies require when afflicted by powerful discordant sensations.

PART 4.

HOW THE IDEAS SPACE CHANGED.

The first chapter of this Part lays the groundwork for a focus on the theatrical events of the late sixties and seventies in Australia that contributed decisively to the Adelaide configuration we examined at the beginning of the last part. The Part begins with a description of the established aesthetic as it existed in Australia prior to 1967. During the twentieth century, Australia had made earlier attempts to find its dramatic identity but until 1967, these attempts did not find ongoing success. This state of affairs is compared with the situation in the US where a successful, identity-forming period occurred after 1916.

The change in Australia had the features as above-mentioned of Turner's social drama and resulted in a major reshaping of the Australian theatrical landscape. How that evolved and changed the space of possible ideas will be described in subsequent chapters of this part. It is important at this stage to explain them in the context of the next important mechanism to unfold in this picture of interlocking mechanisms prompted by our endless response to the positional urge. That is, the use of liminoid spaces such as theatre for ritual purposes coupled with an explication of the role and significance of ritual processes in themselves.

Explication begins with noting those aspects of theatre that may be seen more usually as ritualistic in form and action such as the removed space for workshop and rehearsal and the repetitive and demarcated nature of theatrical presentation. Beyond this, I will consider the nature of entertainment; what makes entertainment entertaining and contending that this lightest of our involvements actually serves an important ritual role that starts with validation and can extend to redressive action. Finally, using Turner's studies of rituals of affliction, I will consider the therapeutic potential of theatrical activity both in the overt forms that Turner describes and also that we saw earlier with the *Chelsea* project and in the covert form of theatre-going.

The latter, covert forms of the therapeutic in theatre-going, provide us with a major insight into the cultural shift exemplified here by the theatrical resurgence of the late sixties. This Part uses the term 'lights', which I briefly introduced in Chapter One. The term refers metaphorically to hubs of theatrical activity that light the way, as it were, to new ways of constituting expression, in this case dramatic expression, reflective of the identificatory desires and therapeutic or restorative needs of a new generation. During this period, the lights were the Nimrod and the APG. To consider their new ways of constituting expression, the focus will be upon:

- a style of work that was appreciably different from an 'established aesthetic',

- a style of work that emanated from certain 'seminal events' such as the first season of *The Legend of King O'Malley* (an immediate precursor to the Nimrod Theatre) at the Jane St. Theatre and its transfer to the Parade Theatre, and
- an encapsulation and development of this style within the lights representing tangible and emblematic centres of activity.

From these lights, other activity and comment irradiated drawing upon their style and using their concepts, modes and methods to explain and justify new work. The lights, by their focus on transformed structures, content and methods realised an unorganised sensation of change in their community into recognised meanings and satisfying desired shapes and styles considered relevant. They focused and encapsulated an underlying sensation that the dominant forms were not expressing contemporary experience. Thus, by expressing new meaning satisfactorily and powerfully, they enabled a progression of ideas, hitherto only virtual, to gain currency such that the space of possible ideas changed. In Turner's terms, the field had experienced a social drama, i.e. a social dislocation surfacing as a crisis in which these companies were the redressive action. With this change, the ritual uses of the liminoid spaces of theatre were enlivened by these altered theatrical modes to new spiritual, emotional and intellectual ways of being and debate.

The histories of the Nimrod and the APG have been covered well by Leonard Radic[130], Peter Fitzpatrick[131] and more recently, describing them as central to a "New Wave", by Julian Meyrick[132] and Gabrielle Wolf[133] (both their book titles contain this term), as has been the story of the Australian theatre in the lead up to the advent of these companies. I will now draw on this work and my own primary research to describe themes in their history in terms of their role as lights. The Nimrod and the APG enacted an Australian version of rituals that amount to mechanisms of identification and management of social afflictions seen as besetting social interaction and that rang discordantly with a re-forming worldview.

Meyrick fills out this picture by comparing the approaches of new wavers with the 'anglo' generation that preceded them. Meyrick's comparisons emphasise the new wave's oppositional outlook, its aggressively nationalistic stance concerned for values of access and equity, its

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130 Radic, Leonard, The State of Play: The Revolution in the Australian Theatre since the 1960s. Penguin Books, 1991.

131 Op. cit., Fitzpatrick, After the Doll: Australian Drama since 1955.

132 Op. cit., Meyrick, Julian, See How It Runs: Nimrod and the New Wave.

133 Wolf, Gabrielle, Make It Australian: The Australian Performing Group, the Pram Factory and New Wave Theatre

determination about fluidity of role and belief in spontaneity as underlying professionalism.[134]

This part ends with the notion of an education of perception. Adapted from the work of Walter Benjamin, this concept is employed to underline the irreversibility of social dramatic change to the space of possible ideas. Simply, the term implies a change in perception educated by events, as it were, such that previous modes of perception and the concepts that directed them are irrevocably changed. The kind of change Peter Brook envisages becomes in fact, through this education, ideologically marked by the shift in the space of possible ideas and thus the nature of the available positions able to be taken by groups and individuals.

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134 Op. cit., Meyrick, Julian, See How It Runs: Nimrod and the New Wave., p 10.

Chapter 9. The 'Established' Theatrical Aesthetic – the State of Ideas before the Break.

This chapter describes the established theatrical aesthetic that existed before the significant 'post-colonial' break in the late sixties. The attachment of this established space of possible ideas to foreign and in particular, English, perspectives on 'excellence' of theatrical work is described. The lack of success in forming an Australian dramatic identity is compared with the US post '16 and the very different temperament of theatrical emancipation in Australia post '67. During this period, much Australian work was relegated to a near invisible 'realm of derring-do'. This term and others are introduced as aspects of the space of possible ideas.

The 'Established' Theatrical Aesthetic.

The pattern that operated in any Australian city before the seventies had critically changed by the end of this decade. The upsurge in national/cultural expression that occurred in the sixties redefined much of the intellectual culture, certainly the intellectual debate and, accordingly, the nature of the corresponding cultural product. The change contested the value of various existing forms of cultural capital and introduced new ones. Concomitantly, the subject matter that occupied those moments of social and individual participation in the liminoid activity of theatre also changed altering in turn the language and style with which legitimating practices were pursued.

Before 1970, the theatrical centre had gradually shifted towards relatively large professional companies with a repertoire grown out of deference to the canon of 'great' works, overseas luminaries and 'hits' and to the professionalism of the English theatre. In the forties, the British director, Tyrone Guthrie, was asked to make recommendations for Australian theatre. His response was a plan to import English theatre to educate our audiences whilst training a company of Australian actors in England who would later return to our shores with the training to reproduce the great works of theatre in the manner and so the style with which they had been taught in England. Behind this, one again sees how the notion of excellence had a definition grounded in a preferred style whatever the rigor of standard and training that may lie behind it. A belief that an Australian theatre should somehow be homegrown enabled resistance to Guthrie's plan.

Later, when the Elizabethan Theatre Trust was formed, its executive director was another English producer, Hugh Hunt, who possessed a similar attitude to that of Guthrie. Paradoxically, the Trust succeeded as much because of the fortuitous success of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* as because of Hunt's 'Englishness' of approach. Nevertheless, programming and acting style, which depended on what was understood to be 'British', became firmly entrenched. By the time the long-fermenting hope for state theatre companies had happened, this approach had taken hold within their programmes and style. The irony was that British theatre had undergone, since the mid-1950s, a radical change of content and mood. This was the time of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and shortly thereafter the plays of Arnold Wesker that featured the drama of the quotidian, both deliberately ignoring the overtly 'cultured' tone of much that had been fore grounded in British theatre.

Nevertheless, the scions of the social establishment looked to the British programming that preceded *Look Back in Anger*. A further irony was that as the established theatre in Australia caught up, it did so by importing these new stars of the British theatre continuing to leave the corresponding work of Australian dramatic enterprise out in the cold. Thus, the shape of Australian theatre in the sixties reflected a crucial distrust of an Australian grown theatrical practice. Distrust, and also uncertainty since, in that period, Australian grown theatre remained in the realm of derring-do; that is, an idea we know about and perhaps understand and consider possible yet, for all that, adventurism; adventurism and, more particularly, a flirtation with ideas that do not support the identity foundations of the hegemonic meta-identities. By this definition, it could not be classed within the realm of work expected to produce significant cultural capital and so was considered as barely on the fringe of the 'possible'.

This situation of course produced its own circularity. Leslie Rees records that (particularly in the period before the success of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* in 1954) Australian plays suffered from a lack of incubation that could be found for new plays in Britain.[135] This contributed to, as Rees points out:

> *... a decided amateurism about most Australian stage writing ...*

and though this

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[135] Rees, Leslie; A History of Australian Drama: Volume 1, The Making of Australian Drama from the 1830s to the 1960s. Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1978, p 242.

> *... was often amateurism in the best sense ... Australian stage playwrights, not really expecting to make money or reputation from their plays, roamed freely in ideas and themes, in a sort of happy-go-lucky, "what-the-hell" self-indulgence [which] went hand in hand with serious defects.*[136]

We can glimpse in this report how the space of possible ideas was forming itself in the Australia of this time. A generation of playwrights operated in the realm of derring-do with a kind of tacit acceptance of this condition. The inaccessibility of audiences for these writers and of the writers for audiences reinforced the circularity of this condition and thereby the prevailing structure and stability of the space of possible ideas. As Rees describes the situation:

> *Meanwhile, popular audiences had no opportunity of being trained in appreciation of local themes. So the vicious circle went round and Australian plays became identified in the general mind ... with smaller arty or amateur enterprises.*[137]

The commercial pot-boiler and light comedy dominated the thin band of the possible. Imports provided the theatre with its high art and the musical was as powerful then as it was later as a commercial mainstay with a major player, the J.C. Williamson Company, dominating. As Rees's reference to "arty or amateur enterprises" suggests the Australian in theatre was marginal and risky. The professional field, significantly narrow and often pro-am (a mixture of the professional and amateur), did hold some brave ventures such as the Independent Theatre in Sydney. However, theatrical activity was largely amateur beyond this narrow band.

What was the ritual into which an audience entered when they went to the theatre?[138] This theatre processed its analysis of human and social themes through its attempt to emulate a foreign and, in particular, English method of making and presenting theatre. Thus, its concepts and icons of human living and so its spiritual anchors, both comic and tragic, were derived from an English sensibility and demoted the local experience.

During this period, amateur activity was the site for significant new work. Companies such as the New Theatres, dotted around the country, either continued or developed a social concern in their content along with a steady progress in the quality of their productions. They were prepared to

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136 Ibid., p 241.

137 Ibid., p 243.

138 The significance of this question will be explored in Chapter Ten (see on page 154).

foster and to produce Australian work but their position in the world of theatre and culture was narrowed by their natural connection to a working class left wing rather than to those sectors that controlled economic capital.

University groups also figured prominently in the innovative activity. Among the key developments of the late sixties was the growth of a new and broader attitude to Australian theatre professionalism. The major figures in what became the vanguard theatres of the time - the Pram Factory (home of the Australian Performing Group; APG) in Melbourne and the Nimrod in Sydney were nurtured in university groups and early developed a certainty as to the necessity of a professional attitude and industry.

Since the beginning, professional activity had existed at the ABC and in the commercial world of radio and later television. However, it was seldom available to the development of a self-considering Australian theatre. If this was to occur, it was swiftly recognised at the APG and already known at the Nimrod that just as the development of any craft needed adequate training, so too did the competent actor require training and that adequate production standards required a professional commitment to theatrical tasks.

The culture that bred the activity of these two little theatres was predominantly University-spawned and this intellectual background was as essential to the Australian experience of reawakening as it was to the post 1916 experience in the US theatre. Melbourne University had a well-established tradition of theatre. The Melbourne Theatre Company (Victoria's state company) continues under its aegis but almost despite this conservatism of outlook within its establishment, Melbourne University bred, as have all Universities, the iconoclasm and wit that is an inevitable part of intellectual culture; a style often expressed in revue. Thus for a theatrical emancipation that would depend on the comic punch of a tribe of newly awakened brash, crass characters, Melbourne University became an "engine house of comedy", as Hibberd describes it, as well as an "engine room for new directors and designers".[139]

Likewise, in the US in the early years of the twentieth century, with sympathy for the cultural change that was unfolding in theatre, an energetic School of Dramatic Literature under George Pierce Baker was set up at Harvard and served the reawakening of a national dramatic literature. He adopted a practical approach to the teaching of

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139 Fry, Garry, interview with Jack Hibberd, 17/8/1992.

playwrighting and the work of many of his students, including Eugene O'Neill, directly enhanced the growth of the new movement.

During the 1950s at the University of New South Wales in Sydney under the leadership of Robert Quentin, a School of Theatre Studies (the Australian equivalent to The Harvard School), an acting school (the National Institute of Dramatic Art - NIDA) and a professional company (the Old Tote Theatre Company) were set up under its auspices. Ironically, it was at NIDA, formed on British models, that the most renowned kick-starting play of the period, *The Legend of King O'Malley*, was workshopped, written and produced. The director of that play, John Bell, soon to be the major figure at the Nimrod Street Theatre along with Ken Horler, a co-director and Richard Wherrett, soon to become a Nimrod co-director, were contemporaries at Sydney University. There they worked together at the Sydney University Drama Society, another university group which spawned many significant members not only of Australia's theatrical scene but also of its cultural scene post 1967.

A belief that Australian work needed to be fostered grew with the sense that despite the decades of neglect the notion of an Australian experience could be expressed through a theatrical medium. The Australian experience had begun, in fact, to find a broader expression through TV and had long before achieved acceptance on commercial radio. So, the notions were there but neither the intellectual nor the cultural bases for acceptance of this largely popular expression as cultural capital had yet materialised. The non-commercial professional companies had recognised little of Australian theatrical writing while the universities had found neither the style to capture nor the drive to discover such new expression. Neither realm had any general acceptance of the popular craft of the successful icons of radio and TV who had always been able to tap the sources of humour and pathos across the classes of Australian society.

Such configurations of activity intensify cultural divisions. For Australians missing a sense of high culture, dismissive that the Australian experience could produce it and looking overseas for high cultural benchmarks, the popular could not be an appropriate source. Cultural riches were foreign and required economic riches for their attainment; or else their transplantation to, or emulation in, Australia. What could be Australian in its purpose, craft or content would struggle in such an environment. Thus with the popular eschewed and the elite imported to this supposedly classless society, it would require a conscious brashness and courage to tackle the social divisions reflected in this status quo and to effect some kind of re-formation of perspective.

Thus, in the late sixties in Australia a realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation, which consisted of ideas largely taking their imprimatur from overseas and especially English practice, dominated the shape of the space of possible ideas. Even the radical or progressive theatre of the time owed as much to the radical and progressive theatre of England as to anything that had come out of Australia.

> *Theatre in economically or culturally dependent nations faces a continuous struggle to establish some kind of tradition, for it is repeatedly bombarded by what has been called 'the Supernova effect.'... In the theatre world of such countries the nation shines dimly in the luminance of the international, the modest presence is devalued by the dazzling super-stars.*[140]

Out From Under the Supernova: the Temperament of Theatrical Emancipation in Australia Post '67 with US Sidelights Post '16.

The quest for cultural emancipation summed up an impulse in Australian theatrical life in the sixties and seventies. The above quote, which captures this spirit, was considered an appropriate editorial comment for the first issue of Australasia's scholarly drama journal, Australasian Drama Studies, published in 1982. Given the configuration described in the late sixties it is not surprising that this sensation should have been strong. The idea of emancipation from the 'Supernova effect' illuminates the burgeoning temperament in the post 1967 period, the time of the 'renaissance' in Australian theatre.

Though many of the dominant ideas of the sixties could be sourced to English theatre practice, pockets of competing practice existed. Amongst these was the continuing push for an Australian drama. This desire had begun to have a more significant impact during the sixties. However, except for the occasional success like *The Shifting Heart* by Richard Beynon, and a small amount of Australian programming at theatres like the Emerald Hill Theatre, Australian drama was not represented by a significant theatre company or body of programming until in 1967 La Mama opened in Melbourne. Another competing practice was the radical theatre of university student theatre some of which reflected the influence of the contemporary theatre in the US at its most radical edge and English contemporary theatre in the main. The thought and work of the US radical

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140 Fotheringham, R., Kelly, V. and Ridgman, J., "Editorial", *Australasian Drama Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1, Oct., 1982.

theatre also found expression at La Mama particularly with the 'La Mama Group' (which later became the Australian Performing Group (APG)). Notable during this period and reflecting the influence of this aspect of US theatre were productions of the US Open Theatre's writer, Jean-Claude Van Itallie's play, *America Hurrah*. This play was produced by student and other groups attracting a notoriety that climaxed with a New Theatre production in Sydney banned for obscenity because of its third act where giant sized characters scrawl graffiti on a motel wall and then destroy the room.

Using *America Hurrah* signified other aspects of this period in Australian theatre history. In particular, it bespoke a global concern about the hegemony of American ideas particularly as regards the Vietnam War and this play amongst others of the Open Theatre and similar companies in America at the time captured what was seen as the US affliction Australia shared. Secondly, the participants in the theatre movement of this time showed themselves adept at using the foreign as part of the task of making a new and confident Australian theatre. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Eleven.

Though a significant part of the impetus came from the contemporary US radical theatre movement, the US had long before liberated itself from its own Supernova effect. The US theatre had acquired over several preceding decades such a confidence and maturity in its work that any branch of its theatre would have the assurance to embark in new directions. One has to look back to the US theatre after 1916 to find comparable forces at work that provide a touchstone for comparison with the analogous Australian experience.

Comparatively, what was the experience in the US at the beginning of its theatrical awakening? Intellectual culture in the US during the early years of the century desired a 'modern' theatrical expression and was frustrated by the dominance of both a melodramatic style and the ubiquitous French farce. It was persistent enough to support the growth of a little theatre movement. The Washington Square players in New York and others like it in many of the major cities produced a solid fare of classics and recent European successes. However, a national voice was not heard despite the singular success of William Vaughn Moody's *The Great Divide*. This play, while heralding the change to come, was isolated, rather as *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* was in the Australian 1950s. Not until the Provincetown Playhouse devoted itself to national playwrighting to be followed, later, by The Guild Theatre (and in the thirties by the Group Theatre) did a national voice for the theatre eventuate.

With the desire to develop a national theatre that would stand beside the masterpieces of Britain and Europe, an approach was needed which would complement this ideal. A deliberate break from current practice was required. However, unlike the tenor of the Australian experience in the late sixties and early seventies, the break in the US was more publicly tuned by a concomitant respect for European practice. Both were conscious of allowing a foreign influence to affect their work but in the US, the politics of the legitimising process allowed for a greater acknowledgement of this influence than in the Australian experience of the later, analogous period.

Further, whereas in Australia many young intellectuals were fired with a zeal for the popular, the equivalent intellectualism of the earlier period in New York in particular took on a more aesthetic flavour. An intellectually progressive left wing cultural circle gathered during summer around Provincetown, a seaside holiday retreat for New Yorkers, in the pre-war years of the second decade of the twentieth century. Though the circle itself did not last, it was sufficiently well placed and energetic to spawn a lasting theatrical movement in the Provincetown Players, the group that first produced the plays of Eugene O'Neill.[141]

The luminaries of the European supernova prompted changes of focus and form and were inspirational to the movement begun by the Provincetown Players. This movement burgeoned throughout the twenties and thirties in the US. The strides taken by Ibsen followed particularly by the startling reformations of Strindberg opened the door of stylistic change and experimentation by the Provincetown Players. The bedrock of realism and realistic performance was overlaid with the expressionism of O'Neil and the symbolism of Glasspel and overall their work and that of George Cram Cooke, the Provincetown Players founder, Edna St. Vincent Millay and others produced a robust, vital and inventive national theatre that revered and borrowed with gusto from the great continental figures. These European personalities, like Strindberg and Ibsen, Craig and Copeau, impressed them and gave them the lead in their own experiments with form beyond the well-made play and melodrama. However, as the US theatre feted the Europeans, many worried about the distinctiveness of their own culture.

Theatre Arts Monthly, beginning in the same year as the Provincetown Players, reflected the intellectual and artistic tone of the period. Very conscious of the vibrant culture it represented, the *Monthly* was also concerned to keep before this culture a sense of the artistic theatrical

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141 Goldman, Arnold, "The Culture of the Provincetown Players", *Journal of American Studies*; Vol.12 No.3, 1978.

activity current in Europe. Thus, articles appeared concerning Reinhardt's methods in working with actors, for example, and features on other European directors like Copeau. Alongside these, articles on American directors such as Browne, Hopkins and Belasco, displaying an equivalent interest and respect, are typical of the magazine and convey a sense of cultural confidence.

Despite this confidence, the fear of cultural eclipse behind the resplendent European supernova created a continuing anxiety. Hiram Kelly Moderwell, a prominent critic, writing in Theatre Arts Monthly's first edition (1916) captures the double-edged dilemma. Writing about 'Bobbie' Jones, the great American designer (of, amongst many others, O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*), Moderwell considered it "a happy accident ... [that] Robert Edmond Jones went to Europe". He hoped that American creative processes "would some day wring free of the tutelage of Europe". How? He considered Jones to be freed by his travel and therefore in a position to gain from European influences in a way that could become a model for other American practitioners.[142] Though seemingly contradictory, for much of the twenties American theatre people managed their fear of cultural eclipse in this way, by imbibing foreign culture and then ruthlessly applying it to its American themes and settings. In Australia, this kind of approach was not seen on an influential scale until the events beginning around 1967.

A similar concern had expressed itself in Australia in the early twenties. Louis Esson, a playwright of the first quarter of the century, following advice from John Millington Synge, the Irish playwright, and in collaboration with the prominent writers, Vance and Nettie Palmer, formed the Pioneer Players to produce Australian work in 1922. However, unlike the US, the pioneering efforts of Esson, the Palmers and Stewart Macky were unable to secure a significant foothold within the theatrical life of the time. Commercial managements and dependence on foreign culture maintained an effective stranglehold. Further, the intellectual movements of the time could only be ambivalent to notions of cultural emancipation given Australian membership of the British Empire. Unlike the landscape of ideas in the US at the same time, that in Australia was much more constrained. The hegemony of the dominant culture in Australia was too strong for efforts at the fringe of the space of possible ideas to survive. Such ventures as the Pioneer Players could not establish a sufficient niche at the fringe to enable continuing opportunities for the expression of these ideas.

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142 Moderwell, Hiram Kelly; "The Art of Robert Edmond Jones"; *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Vol.1 No.2., Feb., 1917, p 51.

Up against the colonial fact, national literature focussed more extensively on under classes and the 'bush romanticism' of nineteenth and early twentieth century writers. Louis Esson's attempt to create a folk drama ultimately could only continue this tendency. Though his writing displays his awareness of a broader swathe of Australian life than this, his reliance on the Irish model emphasised the narrowness rather than the breadth of possible Australian cultural expression. In a sense, he had made a foray into the creation of an amended style that might carry with it a new national expression rather as the blending of populism and satire served almost 50 years later. Yet, the attempt missed the point that, even then, Australia was highly urbanised and his 'folk' drama was, to that extent, simply out of touch. If it was to be the idiom then the culture could only look more provincial and so more reliant on its English mentor.

Nevertheless, this work of Esson and others and the powerful images still overlaid from Lawson, Paterson and Dennis provided the benchmark for the protagonist of an Australian drama. A laconic, silent hero emerged who was notable for his inability to communicate the depths of his emotional life.[143]

In the execution of change, stylistic definition plays a paramount role. For the Provincetown Players the prominence of American authors embracing modern European stylistic models applied to American content demarcated the stylistic change. The adoption of foreign content was selective and overt aiming to demonstrate that American theatre did not need to rest on imports or productions of European work. So overtly demonstrating their confidence and ease with, say, an expressionist style was a desired and deliberate action. It struck a note that was appropriate to their time and to the targeted audience: intellectual, internationally attuned and with belief in their power to contribute to a body of ideas.

Less attuned was the Australian experience in the same period. Nevertheless, the desire was evident:

> *It was not merely, one was tempted to believe, the sense of release that comes from an intolerable strain; the country had become aware of itself and was seeking out its own means of expression.*[144]

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143 This is a view propounded by Peter Fitzpatrick in his *After the "Doll"* who sees *The Doll*'s "success ... as the culmination of a number of earlier developments and themes, and a potentially limiting influence." Fitzpatrick, Peter, *After "The Doll": Australian Drama since 1955.* Edward Arnold (Australia), 1979, p 3.

144 Op. cit., Rees, A History of Australian Drama. Volume 1. The Making of Australian Drama: 1830s to 1960s, p 121.

So wrote Vance Palmer about the atmosphere shortly after the First World War that seemed ripe for a venture like Louis Esson's Pioneer Players that had a brief life from 1921 producing Australian plays by Esson, Palmer and others. The Pioneer Players represented Esson's desire to create an Australian folk theatre after the model of the Irish Theatre, the work of John Millington Synge and with the advice of William Butler Yeats. Why was this experience less attuned? Rees in his *The Making of Australian Drama* records the many attempts to create an Australian theatre.[145] The Pioneer Players were perhaps the most seriously concerned to create a national theatre experience before the late sixties. The plays they presented were urban and rural yet focussed more on the rural partly because this was contained in Yeats' advice. One may speculate that Esson's dying drover in his *The Drovers* represented more the dying of an era and missed the growing urbanity that *The Sentimental Bloke* more readily captured. The dying drover, Bill Brigalow's, laconic acceptance of fate, though powerful theatre, may have lacked the linguistic power in character. Other characters of the Pioneer plays with greater loquacity may not sufficiently have caught a national temperament. Hilda Esson, Louis' wife, wrote later with an awareness of the difficulty of creating great drama at the time:

> *To try to be a dramatist, at a time when there was no theatre, no national consciousness which demanded the expression of its own life and problems on the stage, no tradition, was indeed a formidable task.*[146]

The post '67 period in Australia is notable for a loud reversal of this stasis. The keynote was identity and this was expressed colloquially with emphasis placed on a populist style and a recognisable and emblematic Australian vernacular. The approach partook of a world political and intellectual climate in the sixties where a radical and anti-imperial mood produced an affirmation of local languages and dialects. The choice of expression was a self-conscious, confrontational style - a garish light to refocus attention away from the Supernova. Once the 'battle' for cultural independence was 'won', work following was able to benefit from global artistic fertilization applied to local theatrical challenges.[147]

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145 Ibid., pp 99-112.

146 Ibid., p 138.

147 The metaphor winning a battle derives from an interview with Richard Wherrett, 24/7/1992, in which Richard states: "[It was] a battle needing to be won in the early seventies. I think it is a battle that was won - much later, maybe towards the end of the decade". Notably, John Bell, his colleague and, with Ken Horler, founder of the Nimrod, is cautious about whether the battle of cultural independence is ever fully won.

Amongst the foremost innovations of The Pram Factory and the Nimrod was a championing of the Australian vernacular as an icon of the theatrical emancipation of Australian culture and through that opening discussion and reflection upon specifically Australian cultural and social dilemmas. The differences between these companies at this level were minor and reflected the breadth of the emancipatory movement underway in Australia from the late sixties. They both displayed in emphatic Australian terms the spirit of challenge that was abroad throughout the world and in England and America as much as here. Part of that challenge was the assertion of subcultural voices and attitudes. This was as valid for Wesker's characters and Bond's themes in England as for Schechner's performance experiments or for Chaikin's group theatre workshops or for Terry's and Van Itallie's plays in the US as for Australian theatres wishing to hear and let be heard the Australian accent and through it air Australian preoccupations and conflicts.

Before the ultimate success of the Australian theatrical revolution of post-1967, an 'educated' Australian version of BBC or English elocutionary pronunciation on stage and in national radio and television was, with little exception, insisted upon and over Australian colloquial speech. The ideology of vernacular was not then a sufficiently visible part of the space of possible ideas. Nevertheless, it was to become so. A 'mother's' tongue' became the symbol of a kind of cultural submergence which brought with it a sense of lowered worth except via British, or surrogate British, education. Thus, the opportunity to express the actuality of Australian experience through the organs of dominant class dramatic art was largely denied.

> *At the theatre what we were seeing in the late sixties were rather pale carbon copies of successes from Broadway and the West End. That didn't seem to have much to say to Australians. This was a sort of colonial dumping ground.*[148]

... remembers Ken Horler, one of the founders of Sydney's Nimrod Theatre.

John Timlin, Administrator of the APG during its years of prominence, reflects the same atmosphere in Melbourne:

> *This was at a time when I used to send actors into the ABC for auditions - and people like Max Gillies and Bruce Spence [two Australian actors and comics of great popularity] failed and I*

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148 Fry, Garry, Ken Horler from interview with Ken and Lillian Horler, 15/6/1992.

> *couldn't understand why. It was because they had an Australian accent. The ABC was BBC really - regional and colonial.*[149]

Our version of theatrical emancipation, then, based itself upon the vernacular and the accent as the vanguard icon; the most accessible expression of our separate identity. Significantly, the vernacular that arose was urban. The 'laconic, silent hero' of bush romance had been replaced. Again, Fitzpatrick describes the type:

> *Characteristically, the new stereotype is pushy where the old one was reticent, aggressively articulate where his predecessor was taciturn. His manner of speech is usually crude, and always philistine: his manner of life aims to affirm his masculinity through hard drinking and tough talking - and through the females and other material assets, [sic!] he claims to possess.*[150]

There are many significant changes to the 'Australian stereotype' contained in this quote that are worth expanding upon in order to consider for a moment what they offer as a new view of Australian theatre and style. The character is 'articulate', therefore providing a platform for ideas. While articulate, the character's use of speech is aggressive. The character provides the possibility of dynamic responses and that stuff of theatre, conflict. The sound is local and national and it blares out individuality of identity. It rejects Englishness. The success of this character reveals acts of the spectator complicit with this unfolding national identification. Watching the actor enunciating this sound followed the spectator's act of choosing to listen to it by accepting the programming offer of the theatre company that mounted such a sound in the first place.

However, the character invites reaction to 'his' masculinist, racist philistinism. One of the reactions came in the way theatre-makers attempted to organise themselves so that theatre would be more able to express the experience of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other ethnic groups within an emergent 'multi-culturalism. Thus, while this character demanded recognition of national identity, reaction to him urged a civilising, sensitising and broadening process aimed at rendering that nationhood sympathetic, inclusive and enlightened. That is a dynamic possessing substantial dialectic power and exhibiting a cultural reflexivity finally able to respond to underlying problems and conflicts. By

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149 Fry, Garry, interview with John Timlin, 24/7/1992.

150 Op. cit., Fitzpatrick, *After "The Doll"*, p 12.

producing concepts and metaphors that could begin to deal with overdue concerns about national cultural and social health, it is not surprising that this new wave of Australian theatre found broad enough support to entrench itself. The resultant discussion of national life within the ritual of theatrical representation demanded mainstream attention and led to the representation of many succeeding versions of urban and other Australian characters and the afflictions of their social patterns. This theatrical discussion of Australian life along with an expanded picturing of Australia as a member of a global community contributed to enabling a changed and multi faceted view of Australian identity.

To the intellectual New Yorker of the teens and twenties, such a character as this, 'the ocker', would have been anathema. By comparison with the uncertainty of a smaller, imperially and therefore culturally, attached nation, the culture that produced a national theatre in the US showed a greater assurance. This intellectually autonomous culture found strength in new writing and gave energetic support to little theatres committed to the development of the local talent that could give it expression. The basis for such a development did not arise in Australia for a further 50 years and then, at first, it had to be wrested in a deliberately louder and more discordant fashion than had been necessary for the same enterprise in the US.

The idea of vernacular as an assertive cultural emblem and a recognition of the role of dialect and language suppression in the tyranny of colonialism were not then widely recognised and so were not part of the ideology of the time. Vernacular could not be, therefore, a centrepiece or focus of culture. In fact, the tendency was to believe that the new American theatre was likely to be best displayed with a manner of speech quite distinct from the colloquial. The following lines of Sheldon Cheney's (the first editor of *Theatre Arts Monthly*) written as a brief introduction to an article, "How My Plays Should Be Acted" by a French playwright, Paul Claudel demonstrate this.

> *This little essay wherein one of the foremost French poet-dramatists explains how he wishes the actors to present his plays, should prove of interest in the widespread discussion of what is wrong with American acting. The value of musical speech, especially, cannot be insisted upon too often in a country where unpoetic and slovenly use of the voice is almost as prevalent on the stage as in the street.*[151]

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151 Cheney, Sheldon, as editor's note to: Claudel, Paul, "How My Plays Should Be Acted"; *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Vol.1 No.1., Nov., 1916.

A Significant Break.

Something was released in the theatre scene of the late sixties that, though not springing fully-grown from the god's head, at least came with such an energy and determination as to create a substantially changed environment of Australian theatre. Malcolm Robertson, director and dramaturge at Melbourne's Playbox Theatre, registered the change by pointing to a substantial change in the number of scripts submitted at the Playbox, Melbourne in 1992 as being approximately 120 per year as opposed to some 40 odd ten years previously. This productivity was distinguished in Robertson's terms by noting that this number reflected a population of writers having the belief and commitment to complete full-length works for the stage.[152] Robertson's figures represented a national dramatic productivity over some 25 years slowly responding to the greater certainty that dramatic art could provide a continuing space for cultural expression along with governmental recognition and a viable patronage.

Liz Jones at La Mama made a similar point. For her the most potent response to a question about the changes she had perceived between 1973 and 1992 was to note the increase in output at La Mama from six or seven pieces in 1973 to 40+ in 1992.[153] These statistics also indicate the confirmation of dramatic writing and production as a legitimate aspect of national artistic and cultural activity providing some promise of individual recognition.

So, a significant break from past practice occurred at this time in Australian theatre and it required deliberation on the part of the practitioners who produced the change. Yet, questioning the real significance of this period does serve both to remind us of its context in a longer history and to reveal a 'mythologising' of it.

In his essay on the disputed birthplace of baseball, Stephen J. Gould comments on humanity's penchant for myth making, for creating 'sacred sites', supposed birthplaces of the icons of national identity. For this period of significant break in Australian theatre history, the 'sacred sites' were first La Mama and then the Pram Factory and Nimrod at Nimrod Street and then at Surry Hills.

Peter Fitzpatrick in his *After the Doll* quotes Barry Humphries' comment that Australian theatre in the late sixties was another of "those wonderful cultural renaissances we're always having". Humphries' quip captures Gould's sense of the contingent with appearances of change punctuating the horizon from time to time. Further, Fitzpatrick documents a growth in

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152 Fry, Garry, interview with Malcolm Robertson, 10/7/1992.

153 Fry, Garry, interview with Liz Jones, 9/7/1992.

Australian culture since *The Doll* and before the late sixties that reveals a richer tapestry than the notion of a sudden 'renaissance' would suggest. David Williamson, one of the three or four formative new writers who emerged at this time sees it as "simply the realization of a legitimate reciprocal desire on the part of writers and their community to interact with each other in the process of self-definition".[154]

But a consciousness of the significance of the break with the past lived in many of the participants. This point was made by an actor, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, who began his career at this time and often worked at the Nimrod with its major personalities.

> *[The Nimrod affirmed] a belief in what it was to be Australian ... one was part of a cultural awakening of the country. [The Nimrod] created a myth as much as it reflected what was going on.*[155]

The quote expresses the significance of the time and understands the eager characterisations of the period, such as the characterisation as a 'renaissance'. The eagerness is perceived as a mythologising reaction underlying and building a significance into the actuality. Llewellyn-Jones is one of many who were deeply impressed by this period and its fruits; impressed also and heartened by the sense of renaissance and able to identify with its products. Amongst those products were a number of significant, even seminal, events that contributed to the myth making, among them *The Legend of King O'Malley* (which I will discuss in Chapter Eleven). Despite this feeling, Llewellyn-Jones' comment about the created myth reminds us that other social mechanisms are operating in response to such events and periods. The mythmaking distils and generalises the daily interactions and unseen motivations of individuals. It creates heroes and legends and makes romance of history. How does it?

The idea of the blinding effect of what is here called the 'supernova'; the awe and respect for foreign products over one's own, the 'cultural cringe', is part of the discussion of art and culture in Australian life. If one is not at the centre then one feels at the periphery and the urge to be closer to the centre inevitably, understandably and justifiably surfaces. Any 'centre' will attempt to maintain its position, sometimes oppressively, sometimes with inspiration and vigour and often with stale predictability. Its maintenance of position will seldom be generous without paternalism and the periphery, obscured within the shadow of the supernova, faces the task of

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154 Op. cit., Fitzpatrick, After the Doll: Australian Drama since 1955.

155 Fry, Garry, interview with Tony Llewellyn-Jones, 18/8/1992.

discovering its own light to focus the energy burning within its submerged culture.

Moreover, cultural dominance denies the tools of cultural reflexivity to those at the periphery. The meta-identity is culturally removed and concerned to limit or extinguish cultural means of expression and reflection. Amongst these tools, dialect and language provide a primary conceptual tool. Before local concerns can be acknowledged and redressed, the expressive tools that will enable reflection and cultural action need to be identified, appropriated and applied.

This chapter has focussed on an established aesthetic that existed before the significant post-colonial break in the late sixties. It proceeded to contrast the mood of theatrical emancipation in Australia post 1967 with that of the US post 1916. It has ended with the notion of the reclamation and discovery of dramatic tools with which the redressive actions of a social drama were pursued within this particular liminoid activity.

The chapter ends with the notion of a significant break from the established aesthetic. Later in this Part, I will consider how the break constituted an education of perception causing the subsequent nature of the space of possible ideas to allow for a significantly different set of ideological claims.

In the following chapter, I will advance an argument about the ritual role of theatre. It is posited that theatre as entertainment is first a validatory ritual and, while validating the life environment and the positional actions of its patrons, also functions at a deeper level of reflexively addressing the tensions that inevitably arise through positional behaviour. During transformational events, this reflexive role must become more overt if positional survival is to be achieved. In advancing this argument, the interaction between activity and patronage is therefore reinterpreted as a ritual interaction. The nature of the ritual is described, as is the manner in which it interacts with the legitimating processes. In developing this ritual understanding of theatre, I pave the way for understanding the ritual significance of the work that occurred during and after the significant break in Australian theatre practice during the late sixties and early seventies.

Chapter 10. Theatre as Ritual.

Within social systems, theatre is a part of the process of producing symbols that enhance power relations and interest systems. This point relates to the discussion of legitimacy in Chapter Seven. Yet, it is very hard for us to think of theatre or art in general in this light. It seems to miss something important about the experience. What is missing?

Victor Turner's investigations into the nature of ritual and symbol turned finally to considering theatre as a diffused remnant of once central social actions. Whereas ritual actions occurring at a liminal point in village life might act as a sustaining part of that life, the modern variant of this, in his terminology, the liminoid, has supposedly much less to do with this sustainability. In broad terms, this may 'limit' the answer to: "What is missing?", to the ritual remnant, as it were, in theatrical activity. However, this is likely to be a mistaken line of reasoning. It is likely to be of more use to see theatre as one of many forms of reflective activity having ritual form that enables reflection and that together perform a similar function to those liminal activities that Turner studied. This is so because sustainability of any practice must bear enough relation to geo-political reality for legitimacy claims to bear the tests of truth as regards the external or physical world and of comprehensibility and truthfulness with regard to the social world. In following this line, I aim to show how the positioning, distinguishing view of theatre as a producer of cultural capital and, by extension, other reflective forms of activity, does not contradict its role as offering a socially reflective process.

The liminal refers to events occurring literally at a designated marginal place but also figuratively at the margin of the normative. This refers especially to those rituals reflexively focussed on social dislocation often manifested as an 'affliction'. In tribal and early agrarian cultures, liminal processes are a central part of social process. In other cultures such as modern industrial cultures, where this centrality has disappeared and ritual has morphed into other forms such as theatre, Turner terms these forms liminoid aware that they carry some of the same purposes as the liminal. He distinguished liminoid spaces from liminal spaces by special developments in civilisation. In *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage*[156] he describes the states as belonging to tribal and early agrarian processes while liminoid processes are largely post-industrial. Liminal processes are part and parcel of the ongoing social process whereas the liminoid are

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156 Turner, Victor, *Process, Performance and Pilgrimage: A Study in Comparative Symbology*. Ranchi Anthropology Series - 1, L.P. Vidyarthi (Gen. Ed.), Concept Publishing Co., 1979.

"marginal and inserted into the interstices of central servicing institutions"[157].

Theatre is one of these liminoid activities. Its processes include the promotional, the managerial and the creative/craft. These palpable production processes intersect with other social processes such as the legitimating feedback loop that is intangible by comparison and yet determines the direction of the overt, observable processes above and shapes tensions that arise between them. The legitimating feedback loop operates along with other intangible processes considered earlier including group identity formation and choices within the space of possible ideas.

Theatre, being one of society's overtly reflective activities, has pronounced ritualistic form. It is a ritual action occupying a ritual space and occurring upon a ritual occasion. The acts of paying for a ticket, buying a programme and taking one's place in the auditorium; of then experiencing a demarcated beginning through the raising of a curtain or the cross-fading of house lights with the first cue; before voluntarily submitting one's imagination to the feigned emotion of an actor, are all characteristics of ritual action. The imaginative submission is deliberately invoked in order to produce a secondary emotional response in oneself; an emotion that is itself tied to one's life environment by the symbolic correspondences depicted within the theatrical event. The ritual action is tied interpretively through the emotions back to the phenomenological life environment.

The space of possible ideas spatially, cognitively and emotionally defines society's conceptual margins where the ritual action of theatre occurs. The ritualised acts also embody the symbols and rhetoric of legitimacy arising from within the company itself and that the legitimating feedback loop with patronage validates. This means that theatrical fare is likely to reinforce or validate the patrons' worldview and tends to confirm their status and position. However, since art is reflective and revealing of the world, it is therefore, also linked to a revelatory and transformative impulse that feeds back in many forms including reviews and box office success, aspects of the legitimating feedback loop. Thus, the legitimating feedback loop thereby shapes both our production of symbols and our use of them as ritual reflective devices for dealing with the phenomena of our life. In the case study of this thesis, a slice of Adelaide adult funded professional theatre in the first half of the nineties, my intention has been to define the occupation of space by the companies of the time within these dual terms of legitimation of interest systems, on the one hand, and ritual reflexivity on the other.

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157 Ibid., p 52

All theatre activity vies for a slice of the voluntary submission of one's imagination to the feigned emotion of an actor and attempts to woo the volunteer into its symbolic reiteration of the life environment. It does this by offering style within which the ritual activity is clothed. The style begins with programme and promotion and continues through foyer, seating and on into casting, performance and the entire manufacture of the event. Legitimacy ensues according to the legitimating feedback loop and especially in terms of box office results, which may well be linked to ensuring public funding. These demonstrate that patrons' selection of style has been sufficient to sustain production of the style. The available legitimacy is shared and the share is determined by the interaction between, on the one hand, successful stylistic engagement with the life environment of the patronage and, on the other, the successful fashioning of style over time that both contributes and responds to alterations in the life environment of the patronage. The space of possible ideas is the realm describing this sharing of legitimacy.

The Workshop/Rehearsal Space

The creative/craft activity of theatre's liminoid processes occurs in the workshop or rehearsal space. This space supposedly provides the secluded intimacy and privacy of action the creative work of the company needs away from orthodoxy and other ideological forces and in which actors may be able to limit their own personal legitimation pressures. The realm of legitimation negotiation for a theatre company consists of an appeal to class and/or social division, an appeal to entertainment values and an appeal to the patron's perceptions of the public good. The urge to legitimacy within the managerial sector of the field tends to be conservative. It is the realm of instrumental rationality whereas the workshop or rehearsal space bears with it the possibility of lateral insight and change.

There is a continuing tension here as internal forces impose orthodoxy upon individuals and groups within the creative process. Part of this orthodoxy is to maintain the processes producing liminoid possibilities. Another part limits those creative possibilities because of sensitivity concerning the possible responses of external forces to the material produced and the resulting adverse effect upon position maintenance. We recognise the tendency to self-censorship. One can sense here the presence of a cycle of behaviour (to be explored in Chapter Thirteen, see on page 252) where unintended results proceed from certain actions and the causal connections are unacknowledged, unspoken or unconscious.

The liminoid purposes of theatre are often seen as compromised by the routine production of plays as production responds to the appeals of patronage (to class and/or social sector, to entertainment values and to the patron's perceptions of the public good). Thus, the entertainment value of a work can constrain the scope of liminoid operation since this value being product conscious, is predicated upon audience response. The entertainment value of a work may be its intellectual engagement on one night and on another, a musical may offer a different sort of engagement. Though the dramatic value is a distinct consideration per se, essentially we are concerned here with what an audience will buy. Either way, the liminoid purpose can be bent by the social and entertainment values and legitimacy requirements of the patronage. Further, the perception of public good possessed by the patron can also bend the liminoid purpose such that reflexive actions like social commentary, for example, are mediated upon the desire to be considered legitimate by the class or social sector where primary belonging is situated.

Workshop, experiment and other pre- or extra- rehearsal modes are measures that may be employed either to improve the legitimating actions of the theatre but also to protect the liminoid. Questions arise regarding the use of this term, liminoid. The idea of liminality has seen usage in the literature of theatrical analysis. Often this usage attempts to connote those aspects of theatre that it is hoped form a reserved place in some way separate to society and so protective of expression and able to comment upon society.

Turner's related idea of communitas where many individual desires harmonise and transcend into productive and uninhibited group activity, has provided a resonant concept for standards of dramatic practice. These standards take place in the notion of ensemble playing, for example. Bound up in this standard is the hope that spaces exist where communitas can occur.

Liminality seems to express the feel of a rehearsal space, that space in the operation of a theatre company where the reflection on life is manufactured with its associated symbols and style. It is also in this space where a belief in the manufacture of affect is sustained. In other words, the belief that theatre can move or even change lives and society is sited in the methods and operations of the rehearsal room.

The belief in affect refers not only to the audience but also to the performer. The liminal space of rehearsal or workshop is a space where the exploration of self as well as of society is possible. In the introduction to her book *Action Theater*, Ruth Zaporah describes what her improvisatory exercises are in a way that illustrates this liminal feeling.

> *This book comprises an Action Theater awareness and performance training. It's a model, not just for performance but for life. It offers a way to proceed. Who we are, how we perceive our world, and how we respond to those perceptions are the same regardless of the surroundings. In the studio, we improvise within forms that are relevant to the theater, but the lessons we learn affect our daily lives. The training is comprised of exercises and ideas that expand awareness, stimulate imagination, strengthen the capacity for feeling, and develop skills of expression.*[158]

The observation is that the process is to do with divesting daily life in order to face it anew and that this result proceeds from a process professionally related to skill acquisition for theatrical expression. Now, the object of that skill acquisition in large part is to achieve the objective of enabling an audience to 'suspend disbelief'[159]. That is, to be transported into a world of the performance and by so doing transcend or at least remove oneself for a time from the quotidian.

Theatre, along with a few other professions, evinces this dual action intensely and consciously - this is part of its ideology: an actor develops him/herself to maximise audience affect - a professional pursuit. Likewise, s/he can be quite aware of the life expanding possibilities of this activity. Professional development is likely also to be personal development.

These liminal activities automatically develop everywhere as part of the larger mechanisms of human group interaction and motivation and an underlying social desire to maintain social balance. The rituals of affliction that Turner observes and that we will consider shortly demonstrate the primacy of social balance and the requirement to have social mechanisms to redress disruption.

How do these largely idealistic notions of theatre practice sit with the notion of entertainment?

The Ritual Practice of Entertainment.

A study by Maria Shevtsova of theatre going at the Sydney Theatre Company and Belvoir Street Theatre (the theatre that succeeded the

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158 Zaporah, Ruth; *Action Theater: The Improvisation of Presence*. North Atlantic Books, 1995, pxxi.

159 Notwithstanding the urge of Brecht and his adherents who are concerned to keep the audience thoughtfully aware and distanced from their empathic involvement.

Nimrod in its Surry Hills space) found that theatre is seen primarily as entertainment and that if it is seen as possessing anything other than entertainment value then it is seen as possessing educative or instructive value.[160] Certainly no respondents suggested that they may be taking part in a ritual activity and only a very few referred to something like excitation of feeling. Her survey excites a question about the meaning of entertainment to her respondents. She notes that few respondents talked about theatre going in terms of pleasure but then opined that that idea was most probably bound up in the notion of entertainment. However, the twinning of entertainment and instruction echoes legitimation and reflection since there is comfort in a pleasurable reminder of one's place in the world (legitimation) and value in the thought that simultaneously one is brought to reflect on the responsibilities, observances, outlooks and transformations required by that place. I will return to this re-interpretation of entertainment and instruction shortly.

I will now turn to how this trade-off is linked to the ritual process I am suggesting exists in theatrical events. How can a ritual purpose be advanced given Maria Shevtsova's results that theatre is seen primarily as entertainment and that a divide can be noted in the appreciation and non-appreciation of theatre around a rhetoric of excellence (as discussed in Chapter Seven)? I will approach this by suggesting that the craft of acting and the unravelling of story are the two major areas where the pleasure of dramatic entertainment lies. Together these two draw upon key skills on the one hand and shared experiences and knowledge on the other.

Bernard Beckerman speaks of performance as a tightrope walk. In this analogy, he suggests that the audience is responding to the sustaining of an act over time and the embellishment of that act. The longer and more embellished the act, the more exciting it is.[161] Thus, a tightrope walk becomes more entertaining the longer it is sustained; Blondin is more entertaining as he crosses Niagara Falls on a highwire than he would be merely crossing the high wire in a circus ring! The entertainment grows further with embellishment of the feat; so not just the crossing but also the crossing with somersaults, associated juggling of plates and knives combined with balancing monkeys on each end of the pole!

As the tightrope-walker defies gravity, so the actor sustains the imitation of life. The tightrope walker's craft is entertaining in direct relation to the length and extremity of the peril through which it is sustained. Likewise,

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160 Op. cit., Shevtsova, *Theatre and Cultural Interaction*, p 170.

161 Beckerman, Bernard; *The Dynamics of Drama: Theory and Method of Analysis.* Drama Book Specialists, New York, 1979, p 70.

the actor's craft entertains in direct relation to the depth and imaginative authenticity given to the embodiment of another life sustained over an extended period. Both actor and tightrope walker play with the fear of failure, yet to be admired as craft, their acts must allow the audience to feel relaxed enough to feel confidence that the performance will succeed, yet energised enough to focus on the act. For the actor focus on the act ensures concentration upon its meaning. As the act is the representation of life, this speaks to the audience.

For the entertainment to appeal, representation must be both accurate and revelatory. Whatever aspect of the life environment is represented, be it fantasy life or the quotidian, history or the exotic, its moralities and absurdities, its epics, legends and histories or its multiplicity of working, family or local environments, the sensation of authenticity and insight must be felt and appreciated in a way that reveals what is hard to speak. The more it is then the greater the emotional engagement with meaning in the life environment and the greater the opportunity to deal with it with renewed zeal or understanding. This ritual result ensures the reflexive potential of entertainment in theatre.

Within the ambit of any group or class, however stratified and contesting the bands, there is the need to sustain the grouping. Rigidity of bonds and rules cannot succeed unchallenged or unchanged over time and yet some rigidity will be necessary. There must be social means to resolve this innate tension. That entertainment has a ritual aspect built into its parlaying of signification and its liminoid representations of the life environment, means that its actions give a clue to this transformative process.

The ritual activity of theatre is primarily validatory in its effect. For Pierre Bourdieu, whatever else theatre is, it is a mark of distinction both for the patrons flowing from their drive to adopt and maintain position as well as for those involved in its production. Though possessing transformative mechanisms, their effect occurs within the bounds of pleasurable entertainment, which, as we have seen, contains recognition of the life environment of the patronage. We have already noted the tensions and conflictual latency that flow from positional activity and dominating ideologies within the space of possible ideas in studying the break with the established aesthtic. Merely validatory ritual will not manage conflictual events especially when they are destabilising and/or continuing. Other forms of theatre may exist or may arise that manage these transformations and transitions and ultimately feed into the dominating styles and ideologies. The discussion of a national consciousness entering into the symbolism and ideology of high art is an example of this effect. Yet this

could not have happened without alternative and considerable theatre activity.

Maria Shevtsova's study drawn on above focussed on theatre-goers to the Sydney Theatre Company, a major company of the national configuration and so legitimated by the dominant ideas and styles. Yet as we have seen in the Adelaide example, the configuration shades off into other niches legitimated in quite other ways from the centre. Deborah Stevenson's argument points out there are other forms of theatre with their own patronage that do not subscribe to these ideas and that operate with a consciousness of very different life environments from those of the prevailing centre.

Similarly, ritual activity, though focussed on stability, must deal with conflict. Victor Turner's work gives examples of this that enable insights into the ritual operation of theatre in times of transformational event and of the latency of these operations at other times. For Turner theatre stems from ritual liminal activity. It is related to social healing and so belongs amongst those social functions that are redressive, transformative or incorporative of disaffected elements.

Ritual as a Social Therapeutic Operating in Theatre.

Turner's discussion of the Ndembu centred on their proclivity for strife that was exacerbated by their colonial status. It seems that a high divorce rate destabilised lineages, weakened bonds and so contributed to a strife-rife social environment. This needed mechanisms for redress and Turner discusses how ritual played a role. Drawing from Van Gennep, Turner noted three stages of ritual, namely separation, the liminal and the aggregation. In his observation of the liminal, Turner saw a state of 'anti-structure'[162], in which lay the possibility of social remaking. Within this state, new bondings were possible and new relationships and structures could be imagined created and enacted. It was a stage of relative equality and so was fallow for experimentation with non-hegemonic or altered hegemonic modes and arrangements of social relationships.

Amongst others, Turner describes in detail an *Ihamba* ritual. The ritual involves the drawing of a dead hunter's tooth from an afflicted person. The affliction registers as bodily illness, mental disturbance or both but a perception grows either in the afflicted person or in others that the source of the affliction lies in an offence.

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[162] Turner, Victor W., The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure. Aldine Books, 1995.

> *... the ihamba [the shade of a dead hunter represented by his tooth] may afflict someone as a representative of a kin group that has collectively offended the dead hunter.*[163]

Though the ritual of affliction is engendered to draw the tooth, the point to derive from the Ihamba ritual is that the tensions in the Ndembu arose from structural problems in their tribal way of being, complicated by colonial pressures and degradations. In actuality, the affliction of Kamahasanyi, the afflicted person of this case study, relates to a nexus amongst at least his position in the social organisation, his behaviour and his wife's adultery. The complexity of social difficulties surrounding Kamahasanyi is not simply resolvable and the accommodation of it in daily life gradually became too tense to be supportable. Kamahasanyi's 'sickness' is the acknowledged result but the *Ihamba* ceremony reveals aspects of (but not all) of the unacknowledged wellsprings of the problem. The self-exile of Kamahasanyi's wife's lover and others of his kin resolves the situation in the present. Yet it cannot deal with the inadequacy of the social structure that make these circumstances endemic.

> *Kamahasanyi became the channel through which a number of distinct, but co-existing, and even related, conflicts became publicly recognized, and hence to some extent accessible to redressive measures. In the course of integrating Kamahasanyi into his new social environment, ritual behaviour involved a close collective scrutiny of the principal factors making for his partial exclusion. ... The complexity and long duration of the sequence of rituals for Kamahasanyi may perhaps be accounted for by the coincidence that a psyche deeply divided inwardly confronted a deeply divided social system.*[164]

During the course of the ritual that, Turner describes and in the midst of medicinal applications and many bouts of song and dance, there occurred a series of confessions from Kamahasanyi and those closely associated with him as well as others in the village affected by the broader circumstances exposed by Kamahasanyi's affliction. A general point the ritual of affliction presented here makes is that liminal processes engender reflexivity with the potential for stabilising community relations or of

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163 Turner, Victor W., The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes among the Ndembu of Zambia. Clarendon Press, 1968, p 114.

164 Ibid., pp 151-152.

precipitating change and social rearrangement. The ritual is a social healing process.

The ritual of *Ihamba* involved a combination of medical practices and performance involving the protagonist, the community and the ritual specialist or *chimbuki.*[165] In citing this example, I am not seeking precise analogues. The *Ihamba* ritual seems to contain more analogical echoes with dramatic forms of psychotherapy than with theatre in general. However, there is an analogy with the two identity fables I have recounted in illustration of aspects of this study. These were plays performed for audiences. Yet as plays, they formed part of programs specifically designed to be of aid to young people experiencing serious difficulties in their school environments. Moreover, their problems had become disturbing in varying ways for these immediate social surroundings. The action of the play in both cases allowed a series of rearrangements to occur. These included the revelation of suppressed attitudes to others, the rearrangement of relationships, recognition of the affect on selfhood of varying orders of desire for belonging and the development of interpersonal skills.

In *The Story of Larry and Ben* (see Appendix 1), Ben institutes a campaign of bullying against his friend Larry because, by agreeing to talk at the school assembly, Larry renders himself a 'suck' to the teachers. The discussions during the devising process centred on the rival allegiances to the group and to school. These two ideas about allegiance were contradictory on the grounds of the group's anti-school ideology. Yet it was clear in the discussions amongst the participants that Ben's bullying response undermined his moral standing while Larry's grew.

Significantly, conversations with the audience followed each of these plays in performance. A sub-plot involved Ben's fancied girlfriend, Karina, liking Larry. It was interesting in discussion with one young audience member that the morality under discussion came down against Larry and not Ben. His argument was that Larry knew that Ben, his friend, liked Karina but refused to tell Ben that Karina had decided to go out with him, Larry. If this morality could be seen as the standard – and in this context, it was a powerful argument – then it underlines how amoral position and selfhood are. Larry, who may have acted immorally according to one set of standards, has the power to destroy the group and still be seen as a morally upright individual.

The intensity and immediacy of the play's subject matter and style related to, and engaged, the audience to the extent that the discussion afterwards

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[165] Ibid., p 112.

revealed their socially engaged responses. For the participants in the program we may draw an analogy with the *Ihamba* ritual. For the participants in the audience, especially if they are close to the life environment of the players, we may draw an analogy with the broader circles of Kamahasanyi's community. In general, we may draw an analogy between processes that cause reflection on one's social circumstances.

Therefore, ritual is not just about repetitive sequence. The rituals of affliction follow a traditional form but muster a specific content within their forms to perform specific actions of redress. In our complex societies, we have lost sight of such rituals and how they have become infused within our rational/instrumental processes. Yet, as Turner puts it:

> *If unity, then, must be regarded as the product, and not the premise, of ritual action, it must further be supposed that a ritual sequence arises out of some condition of social disunity, actual or potential.*

Theatre is a ritual at a basic level when it validates one's taste and how one desires to be recognised. This is a basic function of entertainment and as we have seen the precondition of recognition and processing of ideas in relation to the life environment belongs to the ritual uses of entertainment. The example of Kamahasanyi and the identity fables I have briefly introduced here demonstrate that there is a continuum of ritual purpose displayed in theatre activity. At the one end there are the rituals of validation and at the other can be found operations that consciously affect our social setting. In these liminoid spaces, from one human situation to another and from setting to setting, identity maintenance and positional stability, ideological justifications and legitimacy claims affecting the social arrangement are inevitable mechanisms.

The pressures of positional claim and adherence to the orthodoxy surrounding the legitimation of positions produce the tendency to breach and schism that Turner describes. It is notable that the partial solutions found through the *Ihamba* ritual involved both social rearrangement and breach. Turner, as we have seen (see on page 149), terms the entire process a social drama.

The rituals of affliction to which Turner introduced us, are a function of pre-industrial society and aim to resolve individual dysfunction relative to community norms. The uniqueness of each individual affliction means that each ritual process takes its own form, that form being an amalgam of the established process of the ritual and the peculiarity of the individual

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166 Op. cit., Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*, p 270.

affliction. It is therefore a creative process where the person charged with the leadership of the ritual must pursue a process that, while guided by the established forms of the ritual will be open to the nuances that arise.

This openness and the established procedure directed towards a resolved conclusion to the ritual take for granted a re-emergence of the individual. That this can occur is due to the modelling of the unexpected into a new theme with which to conceive of the life environment. An individual's perspective on their life environment, modelled thus, has implications for possible change in the normative behaviour of the community. This change may not be far-reaching; it may be limited to the circle of the afflicted individual or it may have implications for relationships across society. The changes post-67 in Australia may be seen as of that dimension. In the story of *Chelsea* (see Chapter Five) the changes were of smaller ambit however the operation more transparent.

In that project, what we are seeing is one aspect of society, i.e. the program that brought together these young people to do this project, addressing a perceived problem in an adjacent aspect of society (the school). The problem is registered as an obstacle to the young peoples' ability to function in the school. This is analogous to Kamahasanyi's affliction. Socially, when an individual's affliction affects groups without abatement, such as with those who participated in *Chelsea*, social remedy is prompted. We can now recognise ritual forms in this remedy.

This process aimed to build young people's resilience through participation in order to manage better the disabling effects of features of their life environment such as 'the popular group'. A crucial moment for Lennie, Chelsea's friend, in the alternative ending is the decision to leave the 'popular group' despite their protestations, their 'pressure'. The young person playing the role of Lennie will be experiencing, through the role, the pressure on Lennie. Yet, she knows that she must enable Lennie to break away from this group in order to obey the story line leading to the rescue of Chelsea. The role-play/acting craft required to achieve this leads her to an understanding or knowledge of the strength to withstand pressure that will be needed for the resiliency of, in this case, self-assertion, to achieve the object set down in the storyline. Such understanding gives a practical basis both for reflection upon that capacity in themselves and for discussion about applying that capacity in analogous or varying circumstances.

In effect, the program counteracted exclusion in order for the young people to achieve a renewed opportunity for identification within the broader contexts of their life environment. Their play in performance invited the audience into their own ritual and into a reflection on these themes. Plays

do this and, as we have already seen, this includes plays that we commonly construe as entertainment. Chelsea, unintentionally, became an overt story of exclusion and alienation.

The process was a conscious and deliberate intervention in much the same sense as Ihembi's is in constructing the ritual of affliction for Kamahasanyi. It happened to be performative and that enabled a rehandling of the emotional and group dynamics experienced by these young people. Though the themes did not need to be this overt, the young people lit upon them and adopted them during discussion. As with Ihembi, enough leadership experience was involved to have success in choosing the processual tools that would lead to a successful conclusion.

However, less overtly, these reflexive actions are a part of our social process. Where we push to position ourselves, we also step back to review the pathology or disjunction that can and will result from this activity. Theatre companies are a part of that process. The moral decisions made by the *Chelsea* participants are those that are appropriate to that scale of operation and sector of social life. They are moral decisions because they involve the application of relative values to the social dilemmas of friends dealing with each other and groups. The tools enabling this dealing with social pathology worked. They worked at two levels, because the play worked at the level of audience reception and because the young people came away from the process demonstrably better able to handle circumstances at school.

With theatre companies, tools are being chosen appropriate to the patronage that wishes to avail themselves of the voluntary immersion in imaginative activity. In this state, the performance enables audience members to struggle with relative values much as these young people have. Company programming and casting are amongst those tools. Have they been chosen and assembled well? If they have not then the reflexive dealing with social pathology that is happening subliminally will not work. There will be a sensation of dissatisfaction, of irritation, of inadequate engagement or simply of boredom.

Turner sees the creative arts as containing aspects of this ritual role but without the centrality of power for transformation and transmission contained in the rites occurring in a pre-industrial community. He therefore calls these arts liminoid. In this sense, they are expressive and provide a vehicle for reflection. I am not arguing here for reflection as a transformative exercise, it may equally serve to confirm existing beliefs. In any case, liminoid activity has an expressive-reflective function.

This quality of creative social expression that theatre, therefore, has, means that part of its operation is determined by this reflective role. In this

sense, it processes social affliction. However, this does not mean that the individuals and groups operating in this field stand apart from positional activity of their own. Nor is this true of the community members Turner observed who participated in and/or had roles of authority in the rituals of affliction. Their participation is also determined by their role in the community and this is a position that they attain and maintain. Likewise the theatre company; art stands apart from the artist.

Bourdieu in his study of distinction shows that whatever other roles theatre may have, it is a provider of cultural capital. In so being, motivations in the field will be to provide sufficient cultural capital to attain and maintain niche. This means that the expressive-reflective function must be squared off against the distinctive function. Thus, any processing of social affliction occurs within the context of the ideas determining distinction. So that social reflective processing will happen within the ideological context, broadly speaking, of workers' rights if one were to have seen Junction Theatre Co productions or, within a multi-cultural perspective, if one were to have seen and patronised the work of Doppio Teatro.

Thus, the idea of ritual in theatre clarifies a moral paradox always evident in its operation in that the positional motivation involves us in unacknowledged actions that belie our statements. Thus the selfish need to find belonging and position for expression sits in tension against our selfless contributive actions to the ritual task of theatre; those actions contributive to theatre's liminoid role as a reflexive mechanism functioning towards social stability within its patronage and milieu.

In this chapter, theatre's ritual actions have been observed within the constraints of both the adopted style and the ideological position claimed. In this regard, a continuum of ritual operation is noted from validation to deliberate interventions with therapeutic purpose. How the notion of entertainment figures in this ritual operation of theatre has been described.

In the next chapter, I will turn to the significant break in theatre style and content in the sixties, seventies and eighties in Australia, a break that was carried forward by the Nimrod and the APG as its vanguard. A study of their positioning affords us a useful view of the development of the space of possible ideas that led to the configuration I have described in Adelaide. This break was built on a new alignment of intersubjectivities in this field that created a new set of ritual processes and forms to deal with the changing environment of thought and action. The following chapter considers the nature of these ritual investigations and gives some insights into their development. I intend to illustrate thereby the role of ritual in the interlocking mechanisms of positional behaviour.

Chapter 11. What it Took to Shift the Space: the Ritual Focus Transformed.

The space of possible ideas is constantly responding to the pressures of position claims. Nevertheless, at the scale of the human lifespan, pressures resisting change emanate from groups and individuals already controlling expressive space. Further, change threatens to destabilise and, as we have seen, this is feared. Therefore, the quite sudden and marked shift in the space of possible ideas coincident with, and centred upon, the origination and development of both the Nimrod and the APG is remarkable and reflects the operation of a social drama. In this chapter, I will investigate that process. In the following chapter, I will revisit aspects of this history, depicting them schematically in terms of the changing ideational shapes of the space of possible ideas.

This history, however, does not aim to provide a catalogue of events. Rather, within a series of themes reflective of the playing out of the social drama and the surfacing of intense new preoccupations, I will select aspects of the history that exemplify the contribution of these events to ongoing stylistic and ideological change in the character of the space of possible ideas. These changes, as I have foreshadowed, reflect a fundamental alteration in the ritual of theatre being played out in the lives both of the producers of theatre art and of the audiences to it. These themes include major themes in the work itself and its development and differences of style both in presentation, method of work and in governance.

A seminal event that demarcated a starting point for this shift in Sydney was the original production of *The Legend of King O'Malley* by Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis. Such an event achieves two purposes. It releases a store of 'felt wrongness' in an audience regarding the dominant ideology. Secondly, it sows a 'seed' of style from which new forms and approaches can proceed.

Similar events occurred in Melbourne. *O'Malley* was remarkable in that it constituted a powerful single moment whereas La Mama in Melbourne produced a similar seminal impact.

The seminal event begins a process of demarcating a new style. Following it, work explores the style, using it to thicken the new identification, embracing it with greater confidence and certainty of success. The APG and Nimrod carried this work forward and these new modes, new meanings and very different styles were soon to begin in other parts of the country including Adelaide.

However, to satisfy the patronage, the new legitimacy must also present a ritual of ideas that not only validates the new positions but also confronts the afflictions that undermine social concord. The premier example of this during the earlier part of this period was the treatment of the figure of the 'ocker', that vulgar but sometimes energetically charismatic projection of the 'ugly' Australian male. The new Australian theatre of these two and other companies with this and other images, used the ritual of ideas to confront this afflicted aspect of our society.

The change exhibited breach in the social fabric followed by a period of crisis and redressive attempts leading finally to, as it turned out, a mixture of reconciliation and schism, a process exhibiting the shape of a 'social drama'.. In redress, new symbolism evolved that established the new stasis or relative harmony of social forces.

The urge to demarcate style to establish a new legitimacy marks the successful progress of this period in Australian theatre. I observe also the effort to ally governance with the newly legitimised ideology. Finally, the movement forward was possible with regard to an enthusiastic patronage providing positive feedback for the style demarcations made.

The Seminal Event and Lights: Roots of Stylistic Change.

Whereas the sociology of art has a tendency to interpose distributive and selective systems between the art producer and art's consumer, the sociology of theatre tends to look to the immediacy of reception. For the performing arts, this is less surprising. Importantly, for any art whatever the interposition, the legitimating feedback loop with patronage binds production and reception according to, on the one hand, the needs of expression to respond to and depict experience and, on the other, the needs of reception to respond to and reflect upon experience. This is the ritual. It is ritual whether the reception is of a still life painted and viewed in the midst of war or as Carroll wryly notes:

> *... focussed wrongly on those Spaniards being massacred by the French firing squad and not on the painting by Goya.*[167]

The period we are about to consider in more detail was one where awareness of purpose and so ritual energy was more pronounced. For many it was thought that the Vietnam War and the conscription of young

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[167] Op. cit., Carroll, Noël, "Art and Alienation" in Costello, D. and Willsdon, D. (eds), *The Life and Death of Image: Ethics and Aesthetics.*, p 96.

people to fight in it could not be ignored to give time to appreciation of the structure of a 'well-made' play. Nor could what the growing global awareness of apartheid in South Africa and the condition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia itself meant about the present meaning of colonialism. Present experience required recognition. Pressure existed for a theatrical response.

The 'seminal event' is an event of power, i.e. an event with the capacity to seed or release a lasting and contextually available new idea, an idea that can significantly alter the space of possible ideas. The power of the seminal event resides in its capacity to focus a moment where spectators feel themselves in the presence of a revealed truth conveyed the style of the event more than its content. Thus, a realistic drama based on King O'Malley's biography would have been unlikely to produce this change. *The Legend of King O'Malley* combined a new vogue of practice and an application of unexpected styles, notably vaudeville, melodrama and political satire to a formative moment in Australian history reflecting Australia's current questionable involvements and attitudes. The historical setting invoked the most divisive issue of the day: military conscription.

Though revelation may describe the sensation of the new event, it is the sense of wrongness, contrast or discordance that is of greater importance. What the event has done is give form to the ideological inadequacy of the presiding ritual (in this case study, the presiding dramatic ritual) to reflect the sense of a new perspective that is emerging but not articulated. The seminal event encapsulates the feeling in a style that can accurately carry these new beliefs surfacing in the space of possible ideas. In this way, the seminal event challenges the dominant styles and beliefs of the meta-identities.

The Legend of King O'Malley was first produced as part of an advanced course at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in 1970. It played at the Institute's Jane Street Theatre in Randwick. It was directed by John Bell and written by Michael Boddy and Bob Ellis. The advanced course of that year worked as an ensemble on this and other works.

O'Malley was a Texan real estate salesman turned revivalist preacher who, learning that his lung ailment, requires a warmer climate (!) turns up shipwrecked in Queensland. O'Malley walks from Rockhampton to South Australia and, after becoming an MLA there, is elected to Federal Parliament where he becomes a Labor minister dreaming up Canberra, the Commonwealth Bank and warring with PM Billy Hughes over conscription to the First World War. The play sets the first half at a revivalist meeting and the second is unleashed vaudeville set in the Commonwealth Parliament. A lampoon version of Faust in which O'Malley

sells his soul to Nick Angel, the devil, who keeps turning up including as the speaker of Parliament drove the plot.

At Jane Street, it was a revelation for its audiences with its brash style, fairground acts during interval, irreverence and fun and its bold embrace of Australian history in its content. Within the show itself, the brash comedy and the high melodrama of *O'Malley* determined the depiction of historical characters rather than any sense of historical accuracy. Billy Hughes, "yer little digga", played by Terry O'Brien, wore his long blonde hair out under a slouch hat, for example, and Prime Minister Andrew Fisher's chin spent the entire second act awash with saliva (a memorable feat achieved by David Cameron in the role).

Underlying this, a seriousness of theatrical intent alongside the seriousness of content was evident. This could be seen in the work of the ensemble. The group operated collectively adopting an ensemble style of work. This style of work was evident in the performance in the give and take of unscripted madness, in the ready folding of the company performance style around the joy of the actress/ors idiosyncratic responses to caricature and in the easy fluid knowledge of each other on stage. Hilarious, rough and refreshing, the show revolutionised the theatre of the time and paved the way for the work of the Nimrod theatre of which John Bell was one of the founding directors, which, with the already operating La Mama in Melbourne and the almost simultaneously established Pram Factory, constituted a watershed in Australian theatre.

The play transferred to a wider audience the Parade Theatre, one that would not necessarily ever attend Jane Street. The Parade was then the home of the Old Tote Theatre Company; effectively the state theatre company of its time and soon to be considered a cultural enemy once the movement, which in Sydney began with *O'Malley*, was established.

The 'larrikin' style deliberately confronted the high cultural world of the entrenched theatrical establishment. These figures could have been presented, within an historical realist style or as epic political ideas in conflict. Yet they were presented in a style deliberately populist in impact. In Melbourne, the APG in presenting *Marvellous Melbourne* adopted the same strategy using broad vaudevillian comedy in historical pastiche to comment upon modern events. These productions symbolised that theatre had ceased to capture an urban shift in opinion, mood and desire. The message was that it had lost touch and had become an organ of an elite only. Circumstances demanded different style and popular styles were chosen. *O'Malley* enabled ideological discomfort to crystallise in laughter and lampoon. It became a powerful symbolic event marking out a definable shifting of the stylistic ground.

Some Themes in the Social Dramatic Breach: the New Identification Thickens.

The new work featured a number of themes that took up the process of renewing the viewpoint taken about Australia and its society including its place in the world. It must be remembered at this point, that I am not supplying a history. This is a description of definitional themes. They form part of an ideology justifying positional claim. These themes, and others beyond the exemplifying nature of this work, are able to operate as claims since they manage social discordance and enable the ritual reorganization of significant tensions.

The themes I will sketch here begin with the highlighting of politics often combined with a vigorous and fascinating ugliness. A major exemplar of this ugliness is the character that came to be termed generically 'the ocker'. I will describe how these ploys contributed to the establishment of a style that carried the ideology underlying these themes and sustained the movement. Behind these themes were others to do with the way foreign influences were brought to bear and how governance itself provided models that also sustained the underlying ideology as stylistic elements in themselves. Finally, I will indicate how these themes began to mature.

Politics and Ugliness.

In Melbourne, the APG had found in their recreation of the 1890s play by Alfred Dampier, Marvellous Melbourne, a piece in the same spirit as O'Malley.

> *In style it [Marvellous Melbourne] was surprisingly similar to The Legend of King O'Malley, at the time the success of Sydney - an interesting coincidence demonstrating how two groups working in equal obscurity 600 miles apart, one serious and the other frivolous in intent, should simultaneously come up with the combination of vaudeville and political satire.*[168]

Yet, though a coincidence, it is not so surprising, since the combination reflects the political atmosphere of the time and a desire to kick over the traces of conservative rule - "that dour Presbyterian cast upon the land"[169] - as well as a need, expressed colloquially, to establish a distinct cultural identity.

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168 Brisbane, Katherine, "From Williamson to Williamson: Australia's Larrikin Theatre" in *Theatre Quarterly* Vol.7, No.26, p 63.

169 Op. cit., Fry, Ken Horler from interview with Ken and Lillian Horler.

At Nimrod, the ingredients of *O'Malley* were repeated in the first show *Biggles* (Nimrod, 1970) and on many occasions thereafter. This style of show became one of the defining characteristics of the company itself. The style of these plays was echoed though in different work from the Australian plays to the Shakespearean productions. All had the qualities and objectives of what Jack Hibberd described as:

> *an intelligent, radical and uncouth theatre ... a theatre that is rich, relevant and ribald. Only then will a constructive edge carve its way through the tallow of current taste and lay bare the bone – the real issues, the myths and mores of our society will then declare themselves, and be examined.*[170]

Hibberd's intensely unruly and direct desire for theatre found its expression at the Pram.

In shows that were debunking in style and vaudevillian in flavour like *Biggles* (Nimrod, 1970) and *In the Feet of Daniel Mannix* (APG, 1970), the style applied to both. They enjoyed the ready joke, the delight in satire, the feasting in theatrical whimsy and nonsense and the application of this entertaining style to a serious point. For a class of educated younger people experiencing the frustration of what seemed to them a national inertia under the conservative rule of Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, and his successors, who had completed two decades in office enshrining values that were increasingly considered irrelevant, this style was intensely liberating. This was experienced by actors when, as a nation, our cringe still led us to seek recognition as actors in England and our own linguistic expression was prohibited from the media that could give it respectability and legitimacy.

In *Biggles,* a character called The Bomb, symbol of the Nukes (played by the two-belt girthed Michael Boddy, one of the creators of *The Legend of King O'Malley*), is an RSL Club wrestler while in *Daniel Mannix*, Mannix's confrontation with Billy Hughes is represented as a shootout. The subject matter was political and social, embedded in a simultaneous celebration and critique of Australian society.

Both *Biggles* and *O'Malley* set an Australian ugliness against a paradigm of British and American handsomeness; Biggles being the air-ace schoolboy hero and O'Malley, the clean-cut American evangelist who became an Australian Labor government minister. The images of Billy Hughes (an Australian Labor Prime Minister in *O'Malley*) and the Returned

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170 Hibberd, Jack, "Wanted: a Display of Shanks" in Holloway, Peter (ed), *Contemporary Australian Drama: Perspectives since 1955*. Currency Press, 1981, p 39.

Servicemen's League (in *Biggles*) are versions of 'the ugly Australian' at their most deliciously repulsive. These images make prominent a style important to the theatrical emancipation the country was experiencing. In these early years of the 'renaissance' in Australian theatre post '67, a confident, certain class of theatre practitioners, mostly university educated, moved to embrace representations of the most inelegant aspect of their culture as the standard-bearing image of theatrical emancipation. Against this image, they put the clean-cut foreigner and invited us to see something spurious in the clean-cut alternative to our own Australian ugliness. While O'Malley and Biggles had the vision, the charm and the comeliness, they weren't 'ours'. Our own vision it seemed, could only be embraced if we first squarely faced the ugly but national alternatives and worked out how to remake them or rather to grow beyond them.

The roots of these two companies belong in the ferment of global cultural change characteristic of that period. Though we think of Larry's decision to speak at the assembly in *The Story of Larry and Ben* as a natural process in growing up, from his point of view this was a stepping away from the identity offered by the group to which he belonged and brought with it significant costs in friendship and belonging. His process was that of a new identification, to embrace what was offered by the meta-identity, the school. The global change I am referring to was also a process of new identification. What differs is that this one, unlike Larry's, was wrested from the meta-identity wreaking change in its ideology, style and practice. On different scales, both these struggles for change are 'social dramas'.

The events that the theatrical avatars of La Mama and O'Malley represented were part of a broader social drama of the time that in this microcosm worked itself through in the histories of the Nimrod and the APG. The four stages in his social drama model beginning with breach and proceeding through crisis to "legal or ritual means of redress or reconciliation" resulting in "either the public and symbolic expression of reconciliation or else of irremediable schism"[171] are all present in this story.

In Australian theatre, the identification that the lights embodied began as vernacular and comic with a satiric, challenging sting. The atmosphere in radical circles at the time of the Prague Spring and the Vietnam Moratoria was of the possibility of co-operation and harmony of purpose co-existent with the unearthing of local expression in word, thought, action and relationship. In the US, during its 'out from under the supernova' period, the light was intellectual with an aesthetic inspiration born in the bright

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171 Op. cit., Turner, Victor, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society, pp 78-79.

European movements of the turn of the twentieth century and fashioned by confident artists into a national statement expressive of their culture in an emancipated theatrical idiom. An intellectual groundswell informed both movements and in each welled a profound desire to revalue their own ideas, talents and worldviews, which each perceived as devalued by the adulation paid to foreign stars.

In the Australian context, they encapsulated different aspects of this global change in enthusiastic well-defined theatrical seasons and events. The clarity of definition of their product enabled a firming of the identity they represented for many people and whole echelons of society represented in the theatre-going sector.

For the APG that sector was boisterously radical and intellectual and sympathetically attached to the liberationist ideologies of the time. It was attached to an iconoclastic uprooting of the specious seriousness of an English past, which never suited the underclass upbringing of the Australian nation. David Kendall, part of the original group that came out of Melbourne Uni and did Hibberd's first group of plays, *Brainrot*[172], captures two poles of the attitude, "the APG eschewed Englishness quite deliberately – and of course Vietnam was central."[173]

A determination to recognise, celebrate and critique a separate Australian culture grew also from a sense of shame that the country was involved in a foreign war, the Vietnam War, as an article of its ANZUS alliance with the United States. The alliance and the war was, to many, a symbol of the replacement of one imperial overlordship with another. It gave the theatre of the period a political edge and character that spilled onto the streets in a way not witnessed before, a political presence to most of the writing and a vigour and energy to the theatre enterprise. Though the APG was more overtly political, the Nimrod also possessed this political energy as in *Biggles* above and shows like *Basically Black* that highlighted the cause of indigenous peoples and was written, directed and acted by black artists.

That Australia could move from one overlordship to another revealed a deep cultural divide, one that threatened the consolidation of the new identification. With the adoption of a new identification comes a defining of its meaning. A new character symbolised this sometimes-painful process. It was the 'larrikin' element transformed into the 'ocker' which made an Australian cultural statement loud enough to gain attention, horrific enough to be funny and articulate enough to express, albeit with difficulty, the state of being of the majority of the Australian WASP male population. It also

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172 This group included Jack Hibberd, Kerry Dwyer and Graham Blundell who came together to develop the craft of acting.

173 Fry, Garry, interview with David Kendall, 30/5/1996.

enabled successive plays and playwrights to explore the insecurities, particularly male, that seemed somehow bound up in this servile aspect of Australian policy.

The Ocker: Confronting the Affliction.

Before the international success of Barry Humphries' film and comic strip creation, Barry MacKenzie, the epitome of the urban ocker was displayed in Alex Buzo's character, Norm, in *Norm and Ahmed*. Again the play and any actor playing Norm can relish the language of the type, the interplay of emotion in this supposedly 'strong' male character who, under cover of night and alone with a foreigner, Ahmed, the Pakistani student, is able to reveal a tangle of deep guilts, resentments, dissatisfactions and loves. Norm is still unable, as the earlier silent, laconic hero was unable, to recognise what ails him emotionally but he has the breadth of colloquial language and the confidence in using it that enables his auditors to respond to and analyse him. The mates in Hibberd's *White with Wire Wheels* are versions of the Second World War digger, Norm, who display Norm's younger variant, all three exhibiting their attachments to car, mates and girlfriends in that order.

Peter Fitzpatrick, after discussing the earlier heroes of Australian drama observes that, aside from ockerdom's most prominent figure, Barry McKenzie, the characters who speak in this vernacular have more complex forces driving them and that it is often in their departures from conformity that the dramatic tensions of the plays are realised. We may see this in Jacko in Buzo's *The Front Room Boys*, an ocker hero who attempts to buck the authority of the 'back room boys' only to find his fellow clerks in the 'front room' violently turn on him.

The ocker is a continuation of the debunking tradition that began in the nineteenth century. Then, the bushrangers, larrikins and currency lads and lasses of our nineteenth century stage mercilessly tormented the 'new chum' (the recently arrived English settler notable for his - and occasionally her - inappropriately refined breeding and turn of speech). The pompous, elocutionary English of the well-heeled and snobbish British settler stood for sophistication, education and pedigree (quite unattainable for the Australian of English or Irish casual poor ancestry). However, for the larrikin, colloquialism, and an increasingly deliberate inattention to the elocutionary detail of articulation and tone, stood for honour and dignity amongst mates, a myth of straight talking fellowship without affectation.

In the context of his arrival, the ocker, in his simpler and more popular manifestations, was refreshing and exuberant. His deflating, raw, crude Oz vernacular, colloquially and endearingly dubbed 'strine', brought off an

Australian cultural revolution with linguistic power and invention - aplomb without a plum.

In the early 1970s, the irrepressible nature of the character reflected the theatrical style. Speaking of some of the playwrights' work of this period Katherine Brisbane comments:

> *They are rorty, wasteful, intensely colloquial scripts and they make one realise how foreign is clever construction, eloquence and precision to this country. They also show, to an awesome degree, how rich, vivid and accurate our colloquial tongue is. For years we have called ourselves inarticulate because we do not as a nation speak the tongue that Sir Robert Menzies speaks.*[174]

The character, Yank, in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* seems to occupy a literary position in the US theatre of the early twenties in some senses similar to that of the ocker. In the summation of Kenneth MacGowran, writing in Theatre Arts Monthly in 1922:

> *the scheme of the play is to show us an abysmal brute [Yank] strong in the sense of his own power ... and then to shake his confidence and to drive him to destruction by bringing up against him sharply and suddenly and terribly the reality of the life above him.*[175]

It appears that theatre patrons felt excitement, shock and wonder at this depiction of the pathetically ugly. The depiction was disturbing to a society growing in assurance and which could not have countenanced the celebration of such a crass figure nor felt any self-recognition in him.

By contrast the APG may well have felt an urge to celebrate the rough-hewn colloquial figure of Yank while experiencing revulsion at the phillistinic vanity of the culture that extrudes a beast of such pathos. John Timlin writes:

> *In the sense in which the APG was then an "alternative" theatre, it was so particularly because of its extravagant jingoism, its total rejection of the tried and foreign in favour of the new and local. ... With an Australian content, too, we could*

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174 Brisbane, Katherine, "Not Wrong - Just Different" in Hollingworth, Peter (ed), *Contemporary Australian Drama*. Currency Press, 1981, p 52.

175 MacGowran, K, "Broadway at the Spring: New York Sees its First Expressionist Play"; *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Vol.6 No.3., Jul., 1922.

deploy our vernacular, our own rhythms and our own accents from the one language we did not have to import.[176]

The paradox of the ocker was that he could not possess the simple honour of the bushman or larrikin. The ocker's insensitivity, boorish naiveté and cultural narrowness was utterly derided by the young intellectual university class and yet because he had a vigour of language containing the power of deflation, the creativity of vernacular and the sound of national (WASP male) identity, he could not become an uncomplicated object of detestation or hatred.

David Williamson, with reference to Australia's 'cultural cringe' and its violent, prison background succeeded by a "later material prosperity", commented that as a nation it struggled to find "a level of cultural sophistication that would erase its reputation as the gauchest and most socially primitive of the English-speaking countries".[177] Though most opinion would accept the thrust of Williamson's almost epigrammatic description of Australian culture, his vilification of the Australian 'crass' beside his free and at times celebratory use of the ocker in his early plays captures the ambivalent soul of the young intellectual of the time.

The ocker was effectively the instrument through which this class of young people came to terms with being isolated in this "gauchest and most socially primitive of the English-speaking countries". The ocker represented the cage of isolation from a world undergoing an exciting and profound renewal. Yet, this was the society of their daily life and community affiliations. Whatever the ugliness, it could not be ignored.

The film, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, presents the most direct depiction of this dilemma.[178] In depicting an ocker in London, Bruce Beresford, the director, and Barry Humphries, the writer, use their hero's crassness to deflate the English and yet McKenzie's sexually and culturally unsophisticated personality, little more than adolescent in its puerility, surrounded by mates of similar distinction present an ugliness hardly redeemed by either its harmlessness or enthusiastic energy.

... to Humphries [the film] was an act of exorcism, wherein he showed his deep loathing for the Ocker ... [But] the film was adored by the yobbos, the very people he'd sought to pillory.

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176 Timlin, John, "Pramocracy: The Alternative Theatre in Carlton, Melbourne." in Smith, Margaret and Crossley, David (eds.), *The Way Out*. Lansdowne, 1975, p 36.

177 Williamson, D., "From Cultural Cringe to Communality."; *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 7 No. 26, 1977, p 77.

178 Beresford, Bruce (director), Humphries, Barry (screenplay) and Adams, Philip (producer), *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*,

And in Adelaide, hundreds of them turned up to form an archway of spouting tinnies. By the time Humphries and I had run the gauntlet, we were drenched in beer and he was retching violently ...[179]

The ocker also released the language, the energy, and the sense of uniqueness in one's background. An Australian vernacular had been released into an environment where it could be validated. It did so at a time also when the political waters broke and a Labor Government was born. The new government acted upon a commitment to arts funding which, by recognising the social and cultural meaning of the new movements, assured their survival.

Above I quoted John Timlin on "the new and local". Timlin, in his hyperbole, spoke of the "total rejection of the tried and foreign". Clearly, the ocker was of broad and obvious importance as, increasingly, a variety of Australian sounds and milieux became. However, it was never true, in fact misleadingly false, to refer to a "total rejection of the tried and foreign". While expressing the ambivalence of vernacular energy alongside a national ugliness, the crassness of the ocker also expressed and lampooned the fear of the foreign, one of the complicated aspects of identity tied up with the meta-identity of nation. The ideological atmosphere of this theatre movement was to embrace the richness of the foreign but to achieve that on an equal and sophisticated footing.

The character in his many forms was part of the reflexive action of the ritual of theatre. The Australian involvement in the Vietnam War was seen as tied to its isolationism from the world by most of those for whom this shifting of ideas in Australian theatre was important. This isolationism in turn was tied to a sense of insecurity and fear of the foreign. It was these ideas that were dealt with by these plays and symbolised in the defensive-aggressive, brash character of the ocker at the same time as his vernacular was celebrated. Given this attitude towards Australian isolationism, the break could not eschew the foreign. To be connected to the world was a theme to be developed as much as the ocker represented a confrontation with cultural reality that needed to occur.

Using the Foreign: Building the Skills to Maintain the Position.

Like the APG, as we have seen, the Nimrod was Australian in its fervour and its style, sharing in many respects the delight in the rough and the coarse, which were considered to express an Australian way.

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179 Adams, Phillip, "How Bazza turned the tide of cultural cringe...", in *The Australian Weekend Review*, September 12-13, 1992, p 6.

Nevertheless, other roots also determined its style. Amongst these, not the least was a respect for the well-developed craft of the English theatre. This sort of influence meant that the Nimrod style mixed the rough and the smooth in a way that placed an enduring stamp on much of Australian theatre.

Thus despite the desire to establish a separate identity from European culture in general and English culture in particular, the Australian theatrical reawakening of the latter half of the twentieth century, and, to continue the comparison, the US before it, were complicated by a need to emulate, model upon and even to raise as shibboleth the cultural traditions of Britain and Europe. Therefore, despite the almost chauvinistic Australianness of the work of Nimrod and the Pram Factory, the 1950s sea change in English theatre fed into Australian theatre. For example, Pinter and Arden, along with the absurdists were highly influential for Alex Buzo and these as well as Brecht, were of formative importance to Jack Hibberd, one of the most prominent playwrights of, and since, this period and a leading personality within the Australian Performing Group. The roots of stylistic change in Australia saw a building of bold Australian structures upon foreign ground plans. We may recall here the paradox of Robert Edmond Jones' tutelage in Europe, that his work and the excellence of US theatre would be all the better for the experience. The same aspiration was evident here, to worldly confidence and belief in the ability to produce world-class work that was distinctly Australian in its perspective

I have made the point that both the Australian and the US ideational shifts in theatre practice were keenly aware of, and indebted to, their foreign influences. In both cases cultural maturity meant that foreign influence was desired and sought as a part of the task rather than as a benchmark of high cultural 'good'. This is what it meant to have come 'out from under the supernova'. Foreign ideas were used to sharpen and thicken the story of a post-colonial identity. Foreign ideas were employed to reinforce the ideology of developing styles; styles that stood in contradistinction to what had been the established mainly English aesthetic. Moreover, the new styles also stood in contradistinction to an Australian elite who determined the availability of ideas through economic control of the means of expression through organisations like the Australian Elizabethan Trust.

This point is not limited to writers for, though the writers of the APG at the Pram Factory, among them John Romeril, David Williamson, Jack Hibberd and Barry Oakley, were of uncommon importance in the development of Australian theatre, the APG itself did not place writing as the single, central interest in the dramatic project. "The process of self-definition", as Williamson described the relationship of the writer to his/her community

(quoted above) also occurred through performance. The original APG, or La Mama 2 as Geoff Milne, an early member, puts it, were a

> *vigorous, intelligent, uncouth, improvisation-based, vaguely lefty, experimental, physical, comic bunch of young actors who suited the material of the plays.*

They began workshops that took The Drama Review (TDR, a US based monthly journal focussing on theatrical theory and practice) as its methodological Bible. Geoff describes one of these workshops' early directors

> *with the latest copy of TDR in one hand directing people with the other hand.*[180]

Thus, expression and performance grew from improvisation, game and a reflex for developing new approaches that would contribute to the cultural volatility of a politically fluid time.

> *The sort of people we did were Chaikin and Grotowski and Schechner and Brecht and Schechner and Teatro Campesino and Schechner, Schechner, Schechner. So the contemporary Australian playwright ironically was nurtured to some extent by an interest in these dreaded overseas influences.*[181]

These companies and practitioners to whom Milne refers, exemplify common features that were replicated through many companies and theatrical projects. Very influential were radical US theatre political performance practices of the sixties along with the central influence for any political theatrical practice of Brecht. The desire for a symbiosis of writing, locality/community and the company of actors set a standard for process, political engagement and contained implications for theatre governance. Grotowski, with his "poor" theatre, brought focus onto the centrality of the actor. This meant a greater reliance on the power of performance, and, the corollary of this, the importance of the ensemble playing of actors.

Nimrod's early influences were also foreign. Both John Bell and Richard Wherrett spent significant periods in England learning and observing workshop approaches to rehearsal using games and improvisation, seeing inclusive approaches to theatre governance and working with influential theatre people. The latter included directors Peter Hall and Phillip

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180 Fry, Garry, interview with Geoffrey Milne, 9/7/1992.

181 Ibid.

Headley, the widely influential Peter Brook whose *The Empty Space* Bell found very persuasive, while Joan Littlewood, particularly through the East 15 drama school, was one of the important influences for Wherrett.

The influence of overseas writers is palpable in the early work. Hibberd's *A Stretch of the Imagination*, despite the fantastically Australian setting and character, forcibly recalls Becket's *Waiting for Godot* in its bleak loneliness of setting though it finds a greater energy of purpose than the apathy and ennui that beset Vladimir and Estragon. The work of Alex Buzo deftly recalled the dimly felt menace introduced to the theatre in the work of Harold Pinter especially in *Norm and Ahmed* and the later *Rooted*. The early work of John Romeril owes much to the work of John Arden and to the theatrical philosophy of Bertolt Brecht.

Governance, Ideology and Purpose.

A major thrust of the Australian theatre by 1970 was professionalism itself. Along with the championing of the Australian vernacular, the Pram Factory and Nimrod were both determinedly professional despite their differences of style. Simply it would not be possible to maintain the standards nor the output without professionalism. This went without saying for the Nimrod since many of the leading figures including John Bell particularly and, soon after, Richard Wherrett were already established professionals. For the APG, a larger step was involved since the necessity of running a theatre required a broader responsibility than the determined experimentation at La Mama . It was a step necessitated by the aims of the work.

This attitude and the gathering success of these small companies, was followed by a growing contingent in other states and regions, confirming the broadening of a dramatic exploration of Australian life and, indeed, human experience. The spectrum of plays ranged from introspective, reflective work to theatre that strove to involve itself with its social and political surroundings. Australian playwrighting and production now reflected more fully in its content the intellectual activity that the Ocker had muscled onto the stage. The problems of professional payment, the focus of that payment, the maintenance of regular output and recompensing writers, technical and administrative staff ensured that governance and management became equal concerns from the outset.

The APG's mode of governance, a collective that it maintained throughout its existence, accented its members' conception of their group identity. Through its themes, styles and processes, it established an identity of dissent towards the stultified society it felt Australia had become during the preceding generation. The identity the APG developed placed the aesthetics of their work within a radical rhetoric and the styles that such rhetoric demanded.

Evelyn Krape, a prominent Pram actress and original member of the Pram women's collective, found a consonance of activity and politics in the APG. The APG invited her to join so both the style and ideology of the group were, at the outset, unknown to her.

> *The group functioned with the belief that everybody was important and everybody had a voice. Now that was very important for me because it meant that as I started to understand what ... the philosophy ... and the essential theatrical world of the place was, I started to like it ... it was very natural for me to perform in. ... it became integral to my work. I was on programming committees and publicity committees. I could learn about space, colour, design, programming, administration; about the whole machinery that goes into making a theatre* [182]

At the heart of the government of the APG was the collective meeting supported by a series of committees that reported to the collective at every meeting. An executive had the effective day-to-day decision-making task of the APG and a varying front line full time staff operated the enterprise day to day. The committees were the Planning Committee, Programming Committee and later a Building Committee. An Ensemble of actors and a Technical Group fed reports to the Collective also.

When criticism is made of the APG, it tends to follow two lines in particular; one that it was meeting-heavy and two that collectivisation reduced recognition of the exceptional talents. This represented a tension in the ethos or definition of the company that remained throughout. Still, as David Kendall points out exceptional talents remained, a vast quantity of work was managed and a collective of up to 70 people continued to operate for a decade. He pays particular regard to John Timlin as the facilitator amidst this activity[183]. The collective reflected the radical political stance of the main formative and continuing members.

> *Hard left – every member of the collective virtually underwent a political grilling to be a part of the collective – and it became more radical. People like Lindzee Smith, John Romeril and Bill Garner were central people – very political*[184]

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182 Op. cit., Fry, interview with Evelyn Krape.

183 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with David Kendall.

184 Ibid.

By contrast, the governance of the Nimrod reflected its company limited by guarantee status with a Board of Directors and executive of General Manager and Artistic Directors and a staff beneath them varying in size over the years. Yet there was a readiness to share the inspiration and the work, to collaborate, which was Llewellyn-Jones' memory of the experience.

> *Apart from its organisation it was genuinely democratic in a way that the APG also was and yet it had a structure that was not as politically democratic ... the Nimrod never had quite so many open meetings. It was really run by the triumvirate [i.e. Bell, Horler and Wherrett] but your input was just as satisfying. One was either in the play or ... serving behind the bar, or answering the phones ... or reading plays or going around to peoples' houses to discuss what to do next.*[185]

As the Nimrod became more established, it also held company meetings on a weekly basis, which were open to all staff including temporary, contract, permanent and executive. While the meetings were predominantly domestic, they did range over all topics so that ideological and other long term and defining issues could be aired. They were inclusive in style and consistent with a liberal humanist outlook that broadly speaking favoured the individual over the collective, believed in national self-determination and extended this belief progressively to marginal communities. At a later stage, a major internal debate about philosophy and direction tested this outlook. However, final decisions rested with the directorship, management and the Board and, for the most part, this was accepted as the way it was and satisfactorily so.

The governance of each bespoke different responses to the theatrical desires felt and to the prevailing configuration of theatre in their respective cities at the time of their instigation and of their major influence during the seventies. Each was an alternative to their respective state theatre company, the APG to the MTC and Nimrod to the Old Tote. Significantly, whereas John Bell and Richard Wherrett had both worked extensively with the Old Tote (Wherrett had been an Associate Director) the APG and the MTC were much more remote from each other. Thus, whatever the alternate picture the Nimrod offered, its major personalities brought with them a respectability that the APG did not share and deliberately eschewed. The Nimrod could not and ultimately did not present the same breadth of alternate practice. Their programming of Shakespeare, despite

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185 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with Tony Llewellyn-Jones.

their radical and local approach to his plays, and their approach to governance and personality emphasised this.

Because of being to that extent less radical in its governance, practice and programming, the Nimrod more seriously subverted the Old Tote than the MTC could ever have been by the APG. Even so, each denoted a major rupture in the prevailing configuration and changed the style that could be adopted by the major companies into the future. Each created a position for an alternative though secondary theatre company and brought to the fore varying forms of more radical theatre practice. Some of these were concerned with expressing the varying manifestations of community self-expression such as multi-cultural and women's theatre.

A statement of July 12th, 1971, soon after moving into the Pram Factory captures the distinction between the APG at the Pram Factory, with a new sense of responsibility and purpose, and the APG as it was at La Mama:

> *It should be stressed that ours is a risky ... situation. ... It's unlikely that our income will ever completely cover expenditure without relying on grants and donations. The amount of capital we've had to expend on re-fitting the building has further complicated our financial situation. The dangers are obvious: everyone on salary has an average working day of eleven to twelve hours, and there are six of them. The vicious circles we face can be discouraging ... the fact that we have to use actors to organise venues. The more time they spend as administrators teeing up jobs, the less time are they able to spend as actors at those jobs.*[186]

The APG started at the Pram with five actors, a director and a writer on salary. This was known as the "core" company or "Portable Theatre". Box office plus a $5000 subsidy from the Council for the Arts supported this staff and running costs. Major seasons (with larger casts) ran for 4 weeks. Smaller shows based on the core ran during the intervening weeks. The Portable earned its keep with touring: schools, lunch hour theatre (factories and unis), children's matinees. Survival was seen as dependent on "keeping the Pram Factory open as often as possible and building up our audiences".[187] They envisaged a late night political cabaret and hoped

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186 *THE PRAM FACTORY AND THE APG*, (anonymous); held in the Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, MS11436, Box 8, "Chronology ..." envelope, 12.7.1971.

187 Ibid.

"that other groups, Tribe for instance, [would] use the space" while they were on tour.[188]

Temperamentally, the Australian Performing Group expressed and satisfied its identity by doing theatre with a politically active edge. Its work included street and community theatre components that its members viewed as equally important to their front stage work.[189] This thrust was present at La Mama. Yet, through the assumption of its own identity at the Pram, the APG combined the expression of its political outlook with the style it adopted to cope with survival. The governing collectivist ideology of the APG was thoroughly consonant with the kinds of development that Evelyn Krape, for example, experienced and the goals she had in her performance work.

Deliberately, the front theatre and the portable theatre presented two very different forms of expression. The front theatre, despite the political intent of the company, was more a theatre of the word, of the writer, than the portable theatre. The portable theatre, besides providing a basic income, took issues to the populace in the manner that theatre-in-education and community theatre companies across the nation soon began to do. Over the years, the APG provided an inspiration for much of this work.

The basic philosophy all shared was the liberationist contention that celebration of what one's community is, renders social relations more harmonious and cooperative (even communal). This was achieved through a general rise in community self-esteem and through a wider recognition of, and even advocacy for, specific communities' concerns and perspectives. This liberationist ideology spawned very specific liberationist movements representing specific 'communities'[190]. The political ethos of the APG meant that it worked to express these issues and the effort to represent accurately the political relationships of its society informed its work.

Naturally, groups formed within the APG that reflected more specific programmes and outlooks. Early in the life of the APG, the predominance of male work was keenly felt and the result was the formation of a specific women's group, the Women's Theatre Group (WTG) that produced the play *Betty Can Jump*. Within the APG, a definite programme materialised

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188 Ibid.

189 In Australia, ' community theatre' refers to theatre developed with and about specific communities of people.

190 I am using the term 'community' very loosely here. In the APG context and for many 'community' theatre companies, the term refers less to localities as to groupings within the population that are seen as needing a 'voice'. This definition applied to disabled people, youth, prisoners and many other groups such as these whose circumstances prevented their stories and plight from coming to the knowledge of a broader population.

that recognised marginalised cultures. With regard to the women's movement what had begun with *Betty Can Jump* continued with productions like Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and the *Wimmins Circus*.

Of the Nimrod Theatre, Katherine Brisbane strikes a different note:

> *its history has not been of dynamic ideological drive but of skirmishes into a variety of terrain.*[191]

The Nimrod sought to employ, by comparison, its executive, i.e. its artistic directorate and administration. The tasking of each company bespoke its difference. The idea of the 'portable theatre' with its broad brief of performance to factories, schools and communities indicates the APG's broadly socialist outlook while the Nimrod's employment structure reflects its liberal humanist outlook.

Lillian Horler, the first General Manager of the Nimrod Theatre captures an aspect of this difference often perceived in one way or another in discussing the Nimrod's nature:

> *Nimrod was always [about] the showcasing of Australian talent it wasn't necessarily of Australian plays. Therefore a very strong factor in it was always John Bell's view of how to make Shakespeare relevant to modern theatre. That was at least an equal strand at Nimrod.*[192]

Nimrod's purpose centred on the craft of theatre and the excellence of talent that could best display that, while the APG held that the craft, the political stance and the governance needed to reflect and support each other. John Romeril, whose playwrighting has perhaps more than any other continued to reflect this balance of craft, purpose and political outlook, in speaking of the APG resists seeing fairness either as 'radical' ...

> *Radicalism lay only in applying such a structure to the theatre. If, and they did, certain industry outsiders found the arrangements entered into at Drummond St strange, that says little about how left-wing we were and much about how undemocratic and right-wing the theatre in Australia actually is. Some procedures were soft, and smacked of hippiedom. If*

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191 Brisbane, Katherine, "The Crippled Hunter - Nimrod" in *New Theatre Australia*, No.3, Feb, 1988, p 18.

192 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, Lillian from interview with Ken and Lillian Horler.

you'd had plenty of work, and someone else hadn't, we might try to even up the score.[193]

or unproductive:

The inner workings, which patrons and outsiders were seldom party to, had a productivity upside. The pay-off was we bred a situation in which people felt cared for and morale was usually high. Because we looked after our own, the leap to 'owning', to identifying with the work, also occurred. A spirit of, shall we call it love, or just unalienated labour, was lavished on what we did. And this process reflected in product, audiences did sight. To the extent Aristotle got it right in supposing we are social animals and human behaviour is characterised by co-operation as much as by competition, the system functioned well. It failed to the extent Hobbes nailed it in arguing life was a case of the one against the many and self-interest lay behind every human act.[194]

The necessity to deal with style, to fit it to the content, to ally it with the structure and to make it fresh and engaging for an audience and ultimately successful in gaining the stage in an increasingly competitive environment means that the playwright and his/her craft come under considerable pressure to adapt. These circumstances favour the more eclectic liberal humanist outlook. Many of the formative members of the APG ultimately followed paths that were more consciously oriented towards this humanist eclecticism. For some the Nimrod and the style of theatre it engendered were more appropriate to their work.

The liberal humanist ideology does not disparage but is conducive to personality as a guiding force. This is evident in Lillian Horler's comments above with regard to both the "showcasing of Australian talent" and the importance of John Bell's vision of a relevant Shakespeare. The authority and charisma in John Bell's style and talent resulted in a public profile that Nimrod was willing to use in promotion. The style projected was within the tradition of the 'great actor for the great parts' and, further, 'the great actor as leader' and so the actor-manager. His attraction to tents, circus and knock-about was both real and part of these images and thus identifiable and familiar aspects of an Australian tradition were very tradeable as style.

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193 Romeril, John, "Last Words On A Nearly Made It Theatre: Memoir Of A Survivor", in Australian Theatre History. The Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, http://www.pramfactory.com/memoirsfolder/Romeril-John.html.

194 Ibid.

The idea, then, that the new movement showcased Australian artists meant a considerable broadening of attitude (if not of product) from that of the APG and at its broadest one could say that Australian plays were a vehicle for Australian dramatic artists. Leonard Radic in his *The State Of Play* characterises this period in his chapter heading "Eighty Per Cent Australian" - referring to the percentage of Australian plays the Nimrod Theatre mounted at its original premises in Nimrod Street, King's Cross. Alongside this memorable series of productions John Bell's (and importantly, though to a lesser extent, Richard Wherrett's) productions of Shakespeare were quite as distinguished and distinctive. Thus, a particular approach to Shakespeare became as much a part of the Nimrod character as Australian plays did. Within the ambit of the Nimrod work, then, the content of the new writing had as much importance as a starting point for stage art as it had in itself.

Bell's and Wherrett's Hamlet at the Pram: the Definition Clarified.

In this context, the visit of Bell's and Wherrett's *Hamlet* from the Nimrod Theatre to the Pram Factory represents a small but illuminating contrast between the two companies. Hamlet was one of the early Shakespearean successes of Nimrod, this production substantially contributed to the theatre company's now developed ethos. The production toured to Melbourne at the Pram and Canberra and played a further successful season upon return to Sydney.

How did it capture and then promote the Nimrod ethos? Few reviewers thought it short of "breathtaking". Words like this were often used - "engulfing"(Kippax), "overwhelming" (Hoad). A strong sense of the stature of John Bell's performance and the intelligence of his and Richard Wherrett's production was pervasive even where issue was taken with aspects of the interpretation. A sense of its aliveness by comparison with better-funded companies, in particular the Old Tote Theatre Company, was another theme often expressed during this period. We gain an insight into the demise of the Old Tote Company by observing a steadily demeaning comparison of it in contrast with the Nimrod.

> *This Hamlet, both in quality and economy, makes nonsense of the extravagant amounts being spent by governmental bodies to achieve second and third-rate results.*[195]

Glickfield's comment offers a further ingredient: 'quality' with 'economy', a feature also attributed readily to the Pram. The achievement symbolised

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[195] Glickfield, Leonard; "Bell's Hamlet among the Best in the world"; *The Sunday Telegraph*, Oct., 1973.

the emerging desire in much of Australian life for a consciousness of national identity expressed in content but with a style that could be energetic and unsatisfied with half measures or cultural borrowing. What was rough-hewn and born of perhaps questionable 'colonial' stock, could exhibit intelligence and artistry without attempting to borrow a 'civilised' artifice from a now foreign culture. As noted above, Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish director and advocate of 'poor theatre' fascinated Australian theatre artists of the time including Richard Wherrett.

This congruence of the poor and the rough combined with the pursuit of finesse and assurance in the work explains the connection and illustrates an aspect of the theatrical ritual of the time. It was the sermon and the reading, the ideology that underlay the claim on expressive space. The rough was the clay and the promise was that it would be shaped. Nimrod's promise was the alchemist's promise: that it could be made into cultural gold - worthy capital. The APG's promise was a liberationist promise, a different ideology with different niches in view. The goal was to understand the mean and unpleasant in Australian culture, to grow beyond it into an inclusive society and thus their work included a celebration and validation of submerged communities.

Nimrod's *Hamlet* was the desire of the company to express its own sophistication not an imported one. The Pram carried this essence also but in the grammar of styles, their emphasis lay in the rough origins rather than in polishing the cultural roughcast. The latter was the Nimrod achievement, which though it went hand in glove with a political consciousness, the expression of this was less strong than with the creation of a polished Australian style. The APG was aware that the gold of this Hamlet belonged on the other side of a narrower cultural divide within the left. The APG, in keeping the coarse edges, was in contrast more concerned with political affinities. Not for them, unlike the Bells, a Vogue spread.

The Pram Factory regarded Nimrod as a bit refined, a bit too polished, a bit too slick and decorative. Their approach was much more raw and tough, a distinction that John Bell did not accept:

> *Whatever the impressions were, I think they were wide of the mark. We didn't think we were polished or refined at all. Quite the contrary it was the Old Tote that we thought was [the] over-refined and over-polished producer of work and that's what we were attempting to be an alternative to. These*

were just rather facile distinctions that grew out of the Melbourne - Sydney very healthy competitiveness.[196]

Nimrod's *Hamlet* at the Pram Factory though successful, appears to have been boycotted by some sections of the APG and viewed by others as at least odd within the confines of this particular theatre company. Hibberd describes it as bringing " the cultural cringers in, they swarmed in [saying] at last we've got a bit of Shakespeare at the Pram Factory!"[197] Others thought the Nimrod actors representative of an English theatrical tradition.

It was very, very unlike anything that we would have done - not only the choice of play but also the rather smooth, well-groomed appearance of the actors and director ... There was a genuine sense of opposition to them. The play succeeded it was good. But it had lots of actors who were very smooth and had mellifluous voices, and came from an English theatrical tradition, I think, whereas we would have thought of ourselves then ... as more ruggedly Australian than English. So the two camps really didn't associate with each other.[198]

Yet the determination of Nimrod to favour the Australian accent even in Shakespearean productions was as strong as that of the APG. For Richard Wherrett, an irony was that this production had earned adverse critical comment in Sydney for its use of the Australian accent.

We were looking instinctively for what was Australian in look in flavour in sound ... those very first Shakespeares that Nimrod did ... John's Macbeth and the Hamlet that we co-directed - we were quite happy that while still observing the demands of verse-speaking that the actual flavour of the sound that was delivered was Australian. ... in some quarters we copped a lot of criticism for this.[199]

Hamlet, even when a conscious effort had been made to allow Australian vowel sounds to be heard in Shakespeare, was considered by many to be out of place at the Pram. John Bell again:

We might have done better to have gone to a different kind of venue but we saw the Pram as being our equivalent in

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196 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with John Bell.

197 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with Jack Hibberd.

198 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with John Timlin.

199 Fry, Garry, interview with Richard Wherrett, 24/7/1992.

Melbourne and therefore it seemed the logical place to go. I'm not sure why they actually wanted it there. It certainly was very unusual for what they were doing. They were totally Australian and very rough and ready.[200]

Capture the Style and Sustain the Legitimacy.

The fabric of the new movement's theatrical legitimacy toughened as each company proceeded through successive 'moments' in their development. Beginning with the seminal event of *The Legend of King O'Malley*, which provided a public energy for an innovative theatrical style, the group focussed that energy on the converted old stables building in Kings Cross at Nimrod Street that gave it its name; an odd but ultimately attractive and suggestive space. It partook of the energy of its King's Cross surroundings, the restaurants, the nightlife, the bohemian history despite the forces' rest and recreation activity, which had grown significantly during the Vietnam War years. Within its modest interior it gradually developed the insignia of the cultured, educated young to which it played: the art exhibited on the foyer walls, the iced banana cake available with the coffee and the brash design of posters and often also of the sets themselves. *O'Malley* forged the style, Nimrod Street housed it and Nimrod came to embody it. The style I describe here, including the emphasis on the seeming accoutrements to style like the food, continued into the old salt factory at Belvoir Street.

For the APG the first moment was the La Mama Group. La Mama modelled notably on its New York namesake, was, and still is, a cradle for theatrical risk and experiment. The moving characters of the APG began as the La Mama Group. At La Mama, they ran workshops, events and productions. There they began their search for methods and styles that could express their political and social consciousness in a theatrical manner.

Their energies coalesced in this period and ultimately the necessity for this energy to expand into greater activity produced a severing of the La Mama bond and the advent of the Australian Performing Group. La Mama's 'shoe box' size could not accommodate the burgeoning APG. Nor could its policy to support many such experiments and risks support the size of venture that the APG was initiating. The APG moved down the road to an old pram factory, the venue once again providing a name for the theatre.

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200 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with John Bell.

The Pram Factory began, a rough space again capturing the sense of poor theatre and a feeling of connection with grassroots. Like the Nimrod at Nimrod Street, it was positioned near a cosmopolitan, vibrant area, Carlton in Melbourne, coffee shops, bookshops and Melbourne University nearby.

Both companies had to make a virtue out of mean surroundings at least in the beginning. However, this suited. To begin with, it made financial viability possible. If being Australian implied something rougher than the Received Pronunciation, then these venues suited the emergence of a rougher style of performance. The broad dramatic brushstrokes of the Australian character depicted in these early days were well served by the coarse surroundings and the ardent style of these two theatre companies.

The theatrical personalities of the APG and the Nimrod were not as obvious about their debt to foreign influences as those of the Provincetown Players or the New York Guild Theatre were. In their public pronouncements, they were concerned to proclaim a nationalism of character and style. The emphasis of Nimrod and the Pram rested on a style of theatre both larrikin and entertaining. This suited a performance style that many professed was quintessentially Australian. For instance, Jack Hibberd notes that:

> *when Australian actors are unleashed, when they are free from the constraints of bloody mainstream, director-dominated theatre; when their instincts are unleashed, they become very physical ...* [201]

and Ken Horler professed that there has

> *always been a good strong irreverent, robust comic tradition in Australian theatre and Australian acting. We were tapping into that [at Nimrod].*[202]

Hibberd's remark about the "physicality" of 'Australian' actors is a claim about uniqueness. Yet if one were to look at Chaikin's contemporary Open Theatre in New York, whose work would have been one of the reference points for the La Mama group and then the APG itself, one must attest the centrality of physicality to its acting style. Physicality was part of liberationist usage, part of the style of a political and philosophical movement and not unique to Australian actors. Yet, the attribution is made as a part of a local style, positively and fervently.

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201 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with Jack Hibberd.

202 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, Ken Horler from interview with Ken and Lillian Horler.

Therefore, to effect change there seemed to be an underlying and urgent understanding that the secret weapon lies in the persuasiveness of style. In this case, the style is promoted as including a physicality that is local, recognisable and, especially, indispensable to a developing national identity. The style sustains the acquired legitimacy. It is in opposition to the established style and therefore occupies a clearly demarcated position in the space of possible ideas. Since the style then publicly denotes the legitimacy of an enterprise, the activities of the enterprise must then be in harmony with the style. The style may have purposely or naturally arisen from the ideas, desires and purposes of the players but once established these purposes and desires need to adopt the decisive style if the acquired legitimacy is to be maintained. In this fashion, activity and governance replicate style.

This is a fundamental understanding. Style is thus a habit of action tied into identity. This habit of action is also the source of legitimacy as I have just described. What we see enacted here is an interdependency of ideology, action styled according to that ideology and legitimacy. We must bear in mind that legitimacy is a product of reception. Reception, if not somnolent, is in some fashion managed or controlled or else it is critical. Thus, there is always a good chance that these interdependencies produce rigidity. The ends of the stories of both the Nimrod and the APG attest to this difficulty of moving beyond the circular rigidity that results from the successful forging of these interdependencies in the first place. By then, they had each become the legends that would inform or provide legitimacy for much of the succeeding theatrical scene. This was particularly so with regard to the Nimrod and in Sydney. In Melbourne, the company that eventually occupied the 'Nimrod –style' niche, Hoopla, later Playbox, did so much in reaction to the APG.

Change to style comes like sensitive navigation of dangerous shoals of patronage partly achieved through knowledge of the waters and partly through soundings in their unknown depths. Such change can only come through reference back to the ideas that have wrought the change. For the APG in particular these were liberationist ideas. Stylistic emphases changed and evolved with reference to these. The determination to keep a political clarity in their work was always evident and was one of the APG's stylistic emphases

An early programme of the APG (1971) combined two plays about killers: the Howard Brenton play, *Christie in Love* (British) and John Romeril's *Mrs. Thally F.* The following excerpts are from the programme notes for the plays:

"There's gonna be a hanging."
It is rumoured that the Bolte government is about to consider lynching one of its hapless condemned.

Christie in Love draws our attention to the crude barbarity of society's 'revenge' ....

Hanging seems scarcely a fit end to the play, let alone the problem. In the case of Mrs 'Thally' (Thallium) Fletcher it is hard to believe the idea of being hung for her crimes ever entered her head. Hanging for her was no deterrent at all.[203]

In these notes, we find the present political and theatrical aims of the group again represented. The theatre is daring, the pitch is against the "barbarity" of reactionary, conservative politics and the attempt is to use examples and content that challenge the reactionary belief. In this case, the programme notes and the plays are intended to prompt questions such as the following. Does capital punishment deter? Do these characters represent society's darker side, in fact, a latent irresponsibility in us all?

These two plays represented the unadorned serious side of the repertoire. Nevertheless, whether serious or comic, Brechtian intention of causing the audience to distance itself from the emotion of the story and think about its social implications suffused the work. Alongside the serious was the popular; the Street Theatre to begin with and later the Sideshow Circus are examples. The semi-vaudevillian early work like *Daniel Mannix* and *Marvellous Melbourne* combined the serious was the popular laying much of the stylistic groundwork.

A sense of self-worth permeated the APG; Milne again, "we really believed we were creating history".[204] Their aesthetic and ideological adventures with method attempted to illustrate revelations of Australian life based on ideologies that informed both their art and life. This necessitated styles of theatre that could work first in the "cruel, small space"[205] of La Mama and then in the immediate space of the Pram Factory - a style too in deliberate contrast with the perceived oppressive structure and predictable procedures of the Melbourne Theatre Company. This ideology was carried through into the programming, as we have seen, and presented by a company that offered an alternative form of governance.

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203 *A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAYS*, (no author) Howard Brenton's *Christie in Love* and John Romeril's *Mrs. Thally F.* Held at the Performing Arts Library, Victorian Arts Centre..

204 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with Geoffrey Milne.

205 Op. cit., Fry, Garry, interview with Jack Hibberd.

Leaving the Ocker Behind: Seasoning the Definition.

The ocker and the attitude to the vernacular can never completely leave depictions of an Australian culture if audiences are to experience the ritual of self-reflexivity that theatre provides. These are defining, fundamental symbols of national being representing ideas in our national meta-identity. The ocker is our Australian form of a deeper universal problem for all cultures, the often destructive but equally magnetic energy of masculinity. This theatre allowed us to confront it as an affliction while glorying in its unstoppable capacity for change. The narrow, racist, anti-intellectual bluster of this character and its deep-rootedness in our 'national psyche', as we say, were part of what was not being said at the Old Tote and the MTC. Sophistication and excellence meant avoiding this ugliness and living a cultured life that assumed this part of Australian life could be separated from our life environment. Centring the ocker allowed us, if not to exorcise him, to at least admit his existence and allow that he was part of our collective soul that could not be understood without admitting his devilry to sup at the table. To admit him meant that the truth component of legitimacy, felt and now demanded, could, after finding this first satisfaction, begin to thirst for more. Suddenly we could look at his insecurities, at his relationships, at his view of the world. We could start to look at the life environment he inhabited with and without him and see its other perils and beauties. As actors and theatre companies, in brashly admitting him to the table we could now begin to season the loud style he seemed to demand and gradually soften, nuance and internationalise it.

In this light, it is interesting to consider some of the components in the acting style of Bruce Spence in Romeril's *The Floating World*. Spence's performance in Romeril's play expressed in stark difference two of the most powerful influences on acting style of this early period. First, in Les Harding, the Pacific War vet, we were in the presence of the ocker. Spence played the accent, the aggressively loose-limbed discourtesy and gauche behaviour and discomfort with the feminine. Spence played the part for its surface confidence and added his culture's satiric view of this character's ocker behaviour. Then, as Les approaches Japan, on this Women's Weekly tour organised by his wife, his underlying feeling of compromise about the tour to his old World War Two enemy's country, maddens him. He is like O'Neil's Yank in unattractiveness and vulnerability. During this second act sequence of Les's madness, Spence's performance changed. Suddenly, Les turns inside out psychologically and lives his anxiety and torment. In Spence's performance, the satire and irony of cultural comment had gone and we were in the presence of highly physicalised and abstracted acting. This is

the physical performance of the La Mama improvisatory experiments that emanated directly from sources like The Drama Review and the radical improvisatory acting style learnt from groups like the Open Theatre.

The use of the ocker moved on from the irony and satire of Les and Buzo's Norm. In Barry Oakley's *Bedfellows* directed by Jack Hibberd, one notices the emphatic Oz accent of Max Gillies, the middle-aging English Professor against Paul Cummins as a further exploration of the ocker syndrome. Yet this is a suburban drama representing the move from the working class *Norm and Ahmed* and *White with Wire Wheels*. As the programme notes say:

> *Though set in the fashionable pseudo-Bohemia of Carlton, the play satirically casts its net more broadly.*[206]

These notes express the consciousness the group had of deliberately widening the scope of their theatrical content. The play dealt with the farcical land of marital comedy and treated gender equality themes. The focus of the humour and the play was on the male protagonist who, linguistically, remained in the realm of the ocker, yet the landscape and interest with relationship marked a change in the material processed.

Alex Buzo, another of Australia's shaping playwrights of the period expresses the development occurring more substantially than in *Bedfellows* by the early to mid seventies:

> *These plays [Macquarie, Tom and Batman's Beachhead] were different in style from my early work because I felt that, a language having been established for Australian writing, it was necessary to move on from this base to more demanding territory. I became more concerned with human relationships, desperation, psychological cruelty, aloneness, pursuit, anguish, and Congreve-style comedy.*[207]

In this move to "more demanding territory", Buzo's *Coralie Lansdowne Says No* represented a marked change. In some ways, less deliberately enigmatic in air than plays like *Rooted* where the air of menace pervades in an, at times, impalpable way, *Coralie* presented a woman dissatisfied with what life and men offered her. Though *Coralie* was Buzo's male view

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206 Programme for Barry Oakley's *Bedfellows* kept at the Performing Arts Library, Victorian Arts Centre.

207 Buzo, Alexander, "The Day of the Playwright", in *Theatre Quarterly* Vol.7, No.26, p 72. By "Congreve-style comedy", Alex is referring to the work of William Congreve, an English restoration dramatist noted for the refined wit and intelligence of his heroes and heroines.

of the female dealing with the male world this represented a significant change of view not only from the author but also in the perspective offered on the figures of our life environment and the dilemmas and anxieties we struggled with through them. *Coralie* showed a switching of view from the centrality of the ocker and a distinct broadening of our sympathies and of the characters and events that could be seen on the Australian stage. At the APG, the same broadening had also occurred with *Betty Can Jump*.

By the time of *Coralie Lansdowne Says No* and *Betty Can Jump,* the ocker had ceased to be central and this denotes a moment when the shift of the space of possible ideas was complete. The English cultural hegemony in the theatre was around this point relegated to the realm of tradition and nostalgia and the new outlook had now succeeded in its contention for maximising the available cultural capital. These two companies had led the work that saw success around Australia.

The working through of the policy of Australian plays, the vigorous new concepts for the classics and the continued feel for the popular led inevitably to a very specific style that grew in maturity, polish and surety of expression. In this next stage, a recognition of this maturity and surety of grasp brought with it a firm acceptance within the culture. This theatre company expressed the self-definition of a cultured, educated class. Steps along the way such as the savour of international recognition with the George Devine Award to the company for its production of David Williamson's *The Removalists* consolidated this sense of certainty.

Though the APG itself did not choose to produce the classics, it supported other ventures. By 1974, a desire to move wider than the nationalist aesthetic framework was evinced, for example, by support for a production of *Orestes* at the Pram directed by James McCaughey. A programme note captures the belief in the development that had taken place that enabled such a production:

> *Words were also used differently in Greek plays, generating the great events of sound and movement that the Greeks called choruses. To recreate these we have drawn on the considerable advances made in group acting over the last generation of theatre in Melbourne.*[208]

The note records that a moment had arrived where the desire to broaden the cultural grasp of a national voice of theatre applied to the Pram also

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208 Programme notes (probably by the director James McCaughey) for Euripides' *Orestes* kept at the Performing Arts Library, Victorian Arts Centre.

along with the recognition of the growth in actor technique and ensemble performance.

The APG's support of many styles like the Orestes above, and, in some cases, actively enabling them was another defining feature. Companies like Stasis and Soapbox Circus grew directly under the umbrella of the APG. Two motivations existed. The desire to keep the Pram turning out a reliable stream of product and thus be well positioned along with the ideology to support and to encourage new ventures. This was in contrast to the Nimrod, which, though it did support other groups from time to time, was built, as we have seen, around a group of specific talents.

An interest in circus had become a feature of the work of the APG as the Soapbox Circus and Circus Oz attests. The Soapbox Circus was a successful outgrowth of the APG working with the Captain Matchbox Whoopee Band. It was a natural evolution from the utilisation of popular forms containing a similar sentiment as that of John Bell's remembering the tent theatre of his childhood. The Soapbox Circus represents a rich vein of circus activity that worked within and grew from the APG.

What were the qualities of circus that made it attractive to the APG's self-definition? Circus was seen as the theatre of all people devoid of the pretensions of 'high brow' art. Circus avoids the confrontation that depictions like the ocker invite and in its visual and physical appeal the eye-feasting dimension of theatre can be immediately satisfied. Again, the physicality of actors to which Hibberd and Horler refer is primarily engaged bringing the focus back to the popular skills of the fairground performer and not confining the actor to the linguistic and realistic skills of the modern theatre that had become the theatrical currency of highbrow art. The physicality of circus can be very potent for its audience as can the earthiness of its appeal, the at times heart-stopping risk of its activity and the baseness of its foolery, its clowns. Clowns are beneath us but wise in their encapsulation of the broad strokes of human character. They are the 'humours' of life, the comic types which we find instantly recognisable. They are not complex and intellectual. The earthy, the popular, the ludicrousness of pretension and the vulgar joy in bursting it are all contained within their appeal. For all its risks, circus is a place of emotional safety. The APG used it as a free and breezy, popular entree to political ideas. In all, circus sat well with the political revue style of a major strand of the APG work from *Mannix* and *Marvellous Melbourne* and including the work of the Women's Theatre Group and the workers' theatre.

The Soapbox Circus combined circus with the politics of the APG project. The venture used the popular appeal of circus and made its arena a

soapbox. *The Timor Show* (1977) of the Soapbox Circus was a combination of circus and political history/theatre, political melodrama/pantomime and song from bluegrass and rock to Tom Lehrer style (*Let's Drop the Big One Now*) satire. What was the belief that produced such a combination of styles? This combination mixed circus with the history of East Timor. Juggling, balances and tumbles combined with researched details of Australia's foreign policy depicted, first, how a diplomatic process had contributed to the tacit allowance of an invasion and, then, the progress of the Fretilin's resistance. All the performers wore T-shirts with APG across their chests. The style partook of the Portable Theatre approach but the perceived power of the circus metaphor was fully adopted using the Brechtian aim to 'distance' the audience from emotional involvement and to focus it upon the political relationships evident in the history.

It also became a defining moment for future development as it was another of the ventures that demonstrated not only the amalgam of politics and popular but in a fashion that crossed a number of popular genres and opened up possibilities for self-sufficiency of the venture itself through recording and large varied-venue gigs. The APG was industrious in searching for varying income-producing ventures.

By the mid seventies, both the Nimrod and the APG had established their style both with a range of applications. For Nimrod, those were Shakespeare, Australian productions and a selection of European including British productions that fit the political and new wave style of their other work. For the APG, those were the Australian productions, the ensemble work and the community, circus and worker theatre ventures. The expectations of patronage had changed and the impact of their work could not be reversed. The use of excellence as rhetoric for funding and displacement of some forms of theatre by others could still be used but its referent was now significantly changed. The shift in the space of possible ideas was complete. Movement from this point would occur from a very different base with very different assumptions and expectations. Professionalism now had a different set of applications and areas of theatre that had not been imagined in Australia before. Amongst these, an example was community theatre, which, though still a contested form, became more established. This example highlights the remainder and use of older and enduring shibboleths. Community Theatre, despite some impressive periods of strong and broadening support, always had an incipient uncertainty related to questions raised from the old shibboleth of excellence and the new (and older) of professionalism. Its roughness, locality and contextuality were not in doubt while the adjustment of

professionalism and values in performance, training and style for its context created influential areas of scepticism.

What does it take to shift the space of possible ideas? The principal points arising in this chapter have addressed this question.

Underlying it all is a growing but unexpressed and only vaguely felt rather than understood sensation that the current shape of ideas in the field has lost its legitimacy. I emphasise that to begin with these are sensations. Even if thoughts have been given voice that are accurate and prophetic, and the thought of an Australian theatre had been around for a long time, there is no saying that those thoughts are right in the presence of a powerful hegemony nor that any action to express them will necessarily work. In fact, the lack of theatre infrastructure devoted to such a project or the discipline or the energy that might be required for it were critical missing factors. They were missing because of the power of the hegemony and the strength of the ruling ideas that were about a foreign and particularly English canon of work and the associated techniques. The justification of excellence bolstered this nexus and unsatisfactory and ill-funded efforts to reverse this situation only added to its apparent validity. Efforts to improve the standard of playwrighting over the decades had relegated the project of an Australian theatre to a quaint obsession in those who had it or to an occasional remarkable piece of work arising from a playwrighting competition as in the case of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*.

When efforts involving a greater deployment of skilled craft were applied as with the Emerald Hill Theatre in Melbourne the programming was still dominated by a foreign canon. In effect, the shift required the confluence of a variety of factors. That the APG and the Nimrod marshalled these factors is what made their contribution profound.

These factors included at least the seminal event within an established legitimacy such as *the Legend of King O'Malley* at NIDA and the beginnings of the APG at La Mama. Both the National Institute of Dramatic art, which enabled O'Malley, and the already established little alternative theatre, La Mama, had given an imprimatur to these beginnings. The presence of a commitment to the training of talent and its subsequent support as a factor underlies commitment to professionalism. The foreign then became a resource for a confident culture. The commitment to pursuing and developing a style to carry a message about what was felt as in Jack Hibberd's call for 'unruliness'. A central factor is the application of this style to a celebration of the uniquely national but the rigor to use this style to confront the afflictions of the national society. The ocker is the supreme example of this application.

The Floating World is the epitome of this effort to shape this reflexive dramatic ritual.

This has been a survey of some significant themes in what we often call a 'paradigm shift'. From the seminal event capturing a growing need to reframe our understanding of our identity, the paradigm shift occurred when the field moves on to encompass the panoply of ideas suggested by the shift consigning those associated with the former paradigm to the realm of tradition and nostalgia. Renewed style mirroring the changed, legitimised ideology accompanies the new ideas. Soon the old ideas are lost in the wash of the new and institutional change follows. However, I have called this 'paradigm shift' a shift in the space of possible ideas. In so doing, I am talking about the effect in the field at the same time as we are noticing the change in a meta-identity. The field itself undergoes a disruption of its ideational space and a renewing of possible niches of expressive activity. Therefore, what we might loosely call a paradigm shift masks the change of space in which individuals and smaller groups must jostle.

Furthermore, I have characterised this change as resulting from a social drama. The term provides explanation for what has occurred. The seminal event I have described here captures the essence of the breach that has occurred within social life. From the breach, the social drama proceeds to crisis and thence to redress or reconciliation. The crisis in this drama amounts to the challenge to the established theatrical forms. The crisis that was precipitated by the seminal event occurred because of a sensation of inadequacy in the ritual forms available to process the meaning of tensions felt in society. In Sydney theatre, the Old Tote Theatre Company represented the established forms. The crisis did not lead to reconciliation. In Sydney, the Old Tote was dissolved not to be replaced by the Nimrod but by the Sydney Theatre Company (STC). The STC borrowed much of the style that had been established by Nimrod whereas in Melbourne the APG itself did not continue but left ideological daughters in the form of companies and theatre movements that grew out of the ideals and approaches it championed. The outcomes, though they could not be characterised as reconciliation – so much of prominence was subsumed in the melee – could also not be described as irreparable schism. Aspects of each contention in the social drama left a defined space in a transformed space of possible ideas.

Chapter 12. Picturing Transformation in the Space of Possible Ideas – an Education of Perception.

In the preceding chapter, I alluded to the character of the ocker as an affliction. I point to this usage as a prime example of theatre operating as what Turner called a ritual of affliction. In describing rituals as they manage individual affliction and social affect and, in later work, showing how theatre has ancient ritual connections and operations, Turner provided us with a method of understanding the reflexive role of theatre activity.

Again, in the last chapter, I described a reframing of broad aspects of national experience emblemised by the work of the APG and the Nimrod. It described this operation in relation to a paradox existing in all human activity, namely, that amidst those organs of our activity such as theatre that aid us to ritually reflect on our daily practices and understandings of the world, there is also the intense positioning activity and ideological thinking supporting that activity that occurs everywhere else. Moreover, the mechanisms that repress acknowledgement of such thought and activity equally apply to those organs, like theatre, that provide the ritual opportunity to uncover truths.

As I will describe in the example of the 'poor theatre worker' in Chapter Thirteen (see on page 253), these mechanisms can cease to support position and begin to either undermine it or to support a position different to the one stated as aspiration and encouraging an ideology, such as poverty, that runs counter to the aspiration. The last chapter showed a successful marshalling of essential factors to overcome the self-defeat and alienation that can grow out of unsuccessful positioning and that characterised much of what occurred leading up to this period of change. Overall, the space of possible ideas sites this successful and unsuccessful positional activity and the last chapter recorded a major and successful shift. In it I surveyed a number of themes contributing to this change.

In this chapter, I will depict the movement in the space of possible ideas in a relatively abstracted form attempting thereby to show the operation purely as a movement in the space of possible ideas.

An effective shift does not appear simply because 'the time is ripe' or because a desire for change finds multiple expressions. One can imagine scenarios of this APG/Nimrod period where the major proponents failed much earlier or where rivals of greater strength split the alternative effort to such an extent that the hegemonic company was able to adapt sufficiently to maintain position.

Following this presentation, I then wonder about the receivers or patrons of this work. Of them, what can be said? Though patronage has sensed a ripeness and even need for change, it is not a sufficient explanation for the actual changes that did occur. What has accompanied or succeeded the sense of ripeness that has brought forth transformation out of the social dramatic process? What is the nature of the social psychological change overall? To suggest answers to these questions, I have used the work of Walter Benjamin who at the time of the first waves of popularity for film, wondered about the meaning for perception of such a vast change in, as he termed it, mechanical reproduction.[209]

In using Benjamin's work, I will introduce the idea of an education of perception. I propose that a change in the mode of human perception amounting to an education of perception occurs that is concurrent with the movement in the space of possible ideas. Each enables the other through the legitimating feedback loop. The change is fundamental and irreversible affecting our ideological outlook and through that our reception, acceptance and delivery of style, altering our modes of relating and the positions available to us. I will stress that this is not simply a change that can be brought about by an advertising campaign. It is a change in the way we perceive our life environment.

A Transformation in The Space of Possible Ideas Depicted.

Referring to the graphic representation of the space of possible ideas given in Chapter Eight (see Figure 6 on page 146), the next figures adapt this basic configuration to depict the changes brought about by the Nimrod and APG styles.

In the figure below, three changes (1, 2 and 3) are depicted:

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209 Op. cit., Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*,

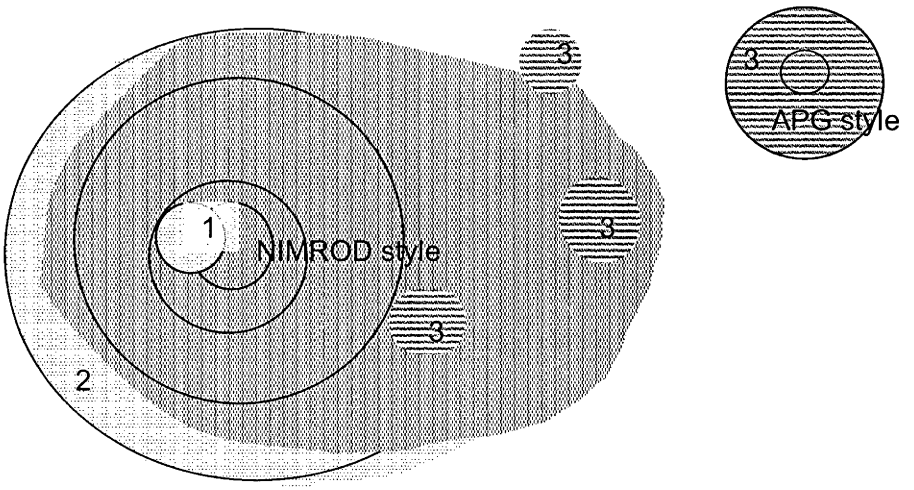

Figure 7 The space of possible ideas showing changes brought about by the Nimrod and APG styles.

The smaller group from Figure 5 (see on page 142) has enlarged and moved to dominate the field. I have called it the Nimrod style. The centre of this group (1) has begun to replace the former centre.

What is left of the previous hegemonic style has become a rump (2), not gone, but no longer the determining style of the field. It has started to move into a past and whether styles it adopted or legitimating ideas peculiar to it remain is dependent on the utility of those ideas within the new or forthcoming regimes.

A second small group is added. I have called it the APG style. Note that it co-exists in the field and that its stylistic influence is felt even in parts of the field (3) dominated by the newly emerging centre.

I have named these two groups, the new hegemonising group and the second smaller group, NIMROD style and APG style respectively since by the time this constellation of style in the field had emerged, the APG was gone and the Nimrod had gone to a margin of its own, soon itself to be defunct. The point of the diagram however is that the styles they legitimated and for which they stood as legends continued.

What actually happened was that the STC was created taking the place of the Old Tote. As I have noted, and despite the interim period before the STC acquired its first Artistic Director when an effort was made to avoid a Nimrod approach, it took many of the stylistic examples of the Nimrod and applied them. Though this company was to take over operations at the Drama theatre at the Opera House, it was also to be housed in new theatre spaces on the harbour in a converted wharf/warehouse complex west of the Harbour Bridge. This venue architecturally replicated the style of the 'new' Nimrod at Surry Hills, which continued as the reformed Belvoir

Street Theatre. The Belvoir Street Theatre was the old Nimrod rescued by fundraising and purchasing activity by practitioners. The result was the configuration of flagship and second company described in Chapter Six (see page 102).

The field of professional theatre simply mapped above as an intangible but possibly mappable space of possible ideas indicates the relative position of the two legends in national theatre terms even though it shows an aspect of its operation in Sydney – the displacement of the Old Tote Theatre Company. In showing this displacement, it is in effect using the Old Tote as an exemplar of a displaced style.

Here we see the major effect of the Nimrod style on subsequent practice and the secondary effect of the APG style though with recognition of its scattered legitimising and reinforcing effect through many smaller companies and projects (3). The Nimrod and the APG represent a set of legitimating ideas that are projected as style. They operate as groups with subliminal rules providing for in- and ex- clusion and they operate to attain position and then to maintain expressive space.

Figure 8, below, suggests the space at a moment in time. Yet one could animate these moments showing a period of cultural transformation along an, if not predictable, then at least conceivable, trajectory. Three of the present moments then would be as depicted in figures 5 (see on page 142, an emergent Nimrod), 7 and 8. These imply considerable movement. Before the advent of the Nimrod, there were other contending theatre companies and ventures but over a period, none threatened the hegemony until the Nimrod. Then over a period of less than 10 years transformation occurred.

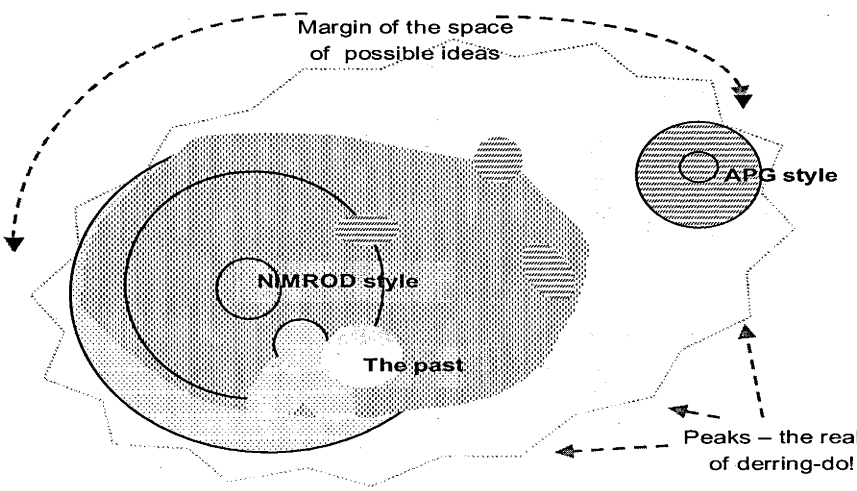

Figure 8 The constellation now superimposed on the space of possible ideas with 'the past' suggested.

The Old Tote Theatre Company had been set up as a result of work done for the Elizabethan Theatre Trust prompted by the ideology of an Australian repertory theatre. That the result of that work was the establishment of a company (the Old Tote) that confronted a very different breach with the ideology it represented, is part of the pre-history to the moment depicted above in Figure 8.

In Figure 8, then, we see, disappearing into the past, precisely that old hegemony – here almost subsumed by the Nimrod style – and now available for parody. Parody: surely the *completest* kiss of death for a style in serious contention. What did it lose in this contest for legitimacy? It lost its political and economic claim on expressive space. It lost this at the point when it could no longer claim the respect of crucial areas of patronage, when it no longer stylistically expressed the new and favoured explanations of the world and the current life environment. The efforts it made included attempting to mount a large Australian season. Such efforts were late and could neither reverse the financial difficulties it faced nor were they managed in such a way as to convince new audiences nor satisfy its diminishing patronage.

Within the hegemony were informal groups that coalesced around these tensions. Membership of the wrong coalition meant loss of an immediate claim to expressive space for its members. A powerful feeling for young actors at that time, those associated with the Nimrod theatre and its embrace of the new and energetic, was a sense of futility around the then Old Tote Artistic Director. Somehow, it seemed to them that he no longer belonged and that he was occupying a position to which he no longer possessed a legitimate claim. These were the reactive thoughts of those who wished to associate with the ways of a 'new world view'.

The Old Tote was located in the Parade Theatre in the grounds of the University of NSW along with the Department of Theatre Studies and the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). For some time NIDA had been inadequately housed and the centre of Sydney cultural activity had moved decisively to the harbour precincts (which included the Opera House and the State Gallery of NSW). For a state theatre company to join this constellation and work from the Opera House Drama Theatre would have made a kind of planning sense and would satisfy the sense of distinction for those whose position required the style that attending these institutions gave.

The failure of the Old Tote attests to its ultimate conceptual and stylistic inadequacy and weakened legitimacy. To persist over a longer period than it did would have meant a more deeply embedded institutionalisation and a more cost effective financial profile. Such institutionalisation could

withstand the whims of time having either the internal capacity to assimilate sufficient of the new to withstand its attack or be powerful enough to resist the contention of the new. In the latter case, its abiding power causes contending claims to appear conceptually puny and so apparently without the abiding philosophical strength to justify claim. This was certainly true of the STCSA, to which I will return later in this story.

It is of note that in spite of the space diagrams representing a present moment, the positioning motivation compels our acknowledgement of the thrust of desire. We are forced to conceive of a succession of diagrams or an animation as a better representation of reality providing us with a better notion of the movement of events in relation to ideas and of ideas as claims on space. The notion of an historical trajectory is thereby bound up intimately in the space of possible ideas. The 'real' past and future lie beyond the space of possible ideas and yet provide the context and outcome of its existence.

At times, we glimpse these circumstances and their bearing on this conceptual trajectory. It may be that the Old Tote was a victim of such circumstances and that the force of liberationist and anti-colonial ideologies and the pressure for these to be represented in the theatre of the day were ultimately too strong, their images and styles too pervasive for the patronage to resist.

The demise of the Old Tote denoted the completion of the social drama that began with *O'Malley* and the thoughts, feelings and events that coalesced around that moment. The completion came in an irreparable schism with the ritual meanings offered by its activities. Though a social drama, the present story does not encompass a revolution in the Australian context. For Australia, this shift in the space of possible ideas was remarkable and far-reaching though less dramatic or violent than other post-colonial stories in other, more contested colonial contexts. In these African and other countries, the similar and parallel story encompassed revolutions. Nevertheless, in all cases the change is stylistic, displaying the distinction of one contesting ideology from another. I now turn to the education of perception that through the legitimating feedback loop both enables the movement in the space of possible ideas and is itself enabled by it.

The Education of Perception.

The 'education of perception'[210] is an idea that one may infer from Walther Benjamin's essay *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

> *During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well.*[211]

He refers particularly to the effect of photography that by endlessly reproducing famous images (the Mona Lisa is his test example[212]) changes our way of viewing it. This entails an education of perception. In these circumstances, a restructuring of the conceptual basis of sensing has occurred followed by significant realignments of our cultural life. Though his essay particularly records the effect of "mechanical reproduction", technological change, on human perception the above quote makes it clear that Benjamin does not consider mechanical reproduction to be an exclusive educator of human sense perception. Rather, perception will be educated by the acceptance of a new set of concepts for viewing life environments. Technological change was simply a prominent and very tangible form of conceptual change in Benjamin's times.

Benjamin sees the change in viewing of the *Mona Lisa* as related to the loss of its "aura"[213]. With reproducibility, it ceases to be the object of a pilgrimage; it is accessible and available as an object of thought, reflection and stylistic manipulation by a broad population. Somehow, its essence has changed – a moustache may be added!

Loss of aura will be the result of any change in perception or ascendency of a new style over old. Sometimes that loss will be complete and irreversible. At other times, the desire to retain aura will cause the new conceptual regime to assimilate the old; Shakespeare's plays are modernised in treatment during every succeeding period. Ancient fables are recycled in new form. Old styles are resurrected to carry new meaning.

What we see with the Renaissance is just such an education of perception. This period flooded the western world with a renewed

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210 This idea was generated by Dr. Rachel Bloul in conversation with the author.

211 Op. Cit., Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, p 222.

212 Ibid, p 243.

213 Ibid, p 221.

conceptual index. Perception of life altered with it. New points of reference were fashioned to guide the human viewing of life. I have here characterised these points of reference as legends and use the term in relation to the APG and the Nimrod.

An aura, unlike a legend, connotes a binding symbolism. The aura he sees as related to works of art with cult or religious significance, religious icons, for example, are hidden away and only available on pilgrimage or on special occasions. Benjamin sees art as originating in cult and magic existing at a time before there was a concept of art. Though this is a debatable point, one does not need to enter into the debate to accept that art can possess cult value. In fact, at the level of group and of the symbols that emblemise group ideology we are in a realm very like cult. That is, groups possess ideational systems that arrange an understanding of phenomena supporting a view of the life environment that protects an underlying claim to space. Since the history of ideas shows us the difficulty of producing an ideational system resistant to critique, it is useful for these systems to carry a mystery within them requiring some faith on the part of adherents. Sometimes the mystery or the legend will be elaborately displayed and at others equally unspoken and embedded within the actions of the group. Either way certain symbols will be evident carrying the unspoken or spoken import of the mystery of their 'truth'. Hebdige's discussion of sub-culture recalls this notion of cult.

Walter Benjamin's notion of the development of human apperception throws light on the events that denoted the transformation in the space of possible ideas I described in the first half of this chapter. The unarticulated desire to be rid of an overarching national descriptor gives rise to the embrace of a new hybrid theatrical style. A new perception is educated thereby and guided by the power of the event that inaugurated the style.

Benjamin suggested that film brought about a perceptual shift enabling an education in perception and so a movement into an empowering new insight. This shift is analogous to the effect of a seminal event. Such an event brings to the surface what has been latent but lacks the stylistic means to express itself. Benjamin's hope, I infer, was for the coming of new media that, through perceptual change, would bring a new confidence to a broader population. I would suggest that it is not just new media that can do this, refreshed styles can achieve the same object.

A seminal event becomes a legend, a symbolic story bespeaking an idea of cultural significance and defining by illustration an important conceptual moment. It is revelatory. However, revelation is not *new* truth. Revelation is the acquisition of a capability to grasp and conceptualise feelings

submerged beneath atrophied thought and established style, that is, the dominant ideas in the space of possible ideas. It leads out the feeling into a mode or style of thought that can be translated into action and utterance in life and so contribute to a new style of being.

Within such a moment, the identity issues concerned with the satisfaction of self-expression in the actors are congruent with the unexpressed and undiscovered desire of the audience to have something particular expressed. The event then takes on an aura in much the same sense that Benjamin proposes. As the aura in photographic portraiture, Benjamin notes, rests in the capturing of a fleeting mood so the aura of the seminal theatrical event rests in its remembrance of stylistic declaration. In this way, photographs and other memorabilia and recordings of the seminal theatrical event such as *O'Malley* provide a commemorative moment of meaning. The moment of meaning, of conceptual grasp, is recalled and summarised by the legend of the event. The aura surrounding the seminal-event-become-legend is no less significant than the aura surrounding the authentic *Mona Lisa*, in Benjamin's example, which we may travel to see.

The aura of a seminal event is associated with a configural change in the field resulting from a rearrangement of support between practitioners and patronage and enabled by legitimation of new practice. Legitimacy shifts when a change in local expression expresses an underlying pressure for fundamental change in the space of possible ideas. Legitimacy, as we have seen (see on page 121) is one of the tests of communicative action and focuses on concordance with the "world of society"[214]. A configural change in the field results from this nexus.

The lights occupy this nexus and their contribution can be depicted in the space of possible ideas interconnecting with both the realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation and the realm of derring-do. In a sense, their advent is volatile because they shift the whole space of possible ideas. For some ideas are dispensed with while others move into greater focus and still others come dimly into view over the horizon of cultural consciousness.

The sea change in Australian theatre of the late 1960s came about through the emergence of legends out of seminal events and the lights of the Nimrod and the APG thickened the legend into the new decade. As Leonard Radic, theatre critic of the Age newspaper and one of the period's leading chroniclers, puts it:

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214 Op. cit., Wuthnow et al, 1984, p 206.

> *If I am biased [in his coverage of theatre companies of the period] in favour of two particular companies and single them out for detailed and close attention, it is because those two - the Nimrod and Australian Performing Group - were, in my view, the initiators and the pacesetters. ... In the theatre, the new nationalism found expression in the work of the Nimrod and the APG. They led and all the others followed, with varying degrees of enthusiasm.*[215]

Lights have the capacity to sum up a community of thoughts and actions. They exist within their period and characterise the identity of their milieu. They partake of that community, of its thought and action. Nimrod and the APG embodied attitudes, fashions and stances in the search for definition that were broad in their particulars but possessed a singleness of thrust. They represented a coalescence of sought ideas and coherences interpreting, production to production, the thoughts, feelings and actions of the life environments around them.

Interpretation is contingent, as are all other thoughts and actions, upon the flows and patterns of thought within the space of possible ideas. Any response is an interpretation, a filtering and realignment of some aspect of the life environment in terms of the definition their ideology subtends and within the circumstantial constraints of contingency. Moreover, as the lights respond, and so characterise the community's underlying re-interpretation of the world, they bend and shape the space of possible ideas. Gradually, the space rearranges itself around them and so they move towards the realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation.

In this way, paradoxically, their responses are simultaneously unique, representative and derivative. They are also sectional. Theatre is a distinguishable class of activity in society, a separate field. As a field, it overlaps and interacts with other fields, other similarly distinguishable fields of activity within a society.

In the print media at the time, the Sunday Review (which later became the Review and then the Nation Review) offered what the Nimrod and the APG offered intellectually and emotionally. The Australian Labor Party itself, even the Australia Party of the time and the powerful anti-Vietnam lobby similarly satisfied broadly congruent social and political desires. These, along with the beginnings of the resurgence in the film industry, all, in their varying ways, existed in, and acted towards, an atmosphere of conscious re-identification. . In this sense, these companies, though

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[215] Op. cit., Radic; The State of Play: The Revolution in the Australian Theatre since the 1960S, p 9.

operating within the quite distinguishable field of theatre, overlapped in political and social intent with lights in other distinguishable social fields.

In the above sketch of contemporary enterprises, I have contextualised them, to suggest that they are, after all, embedded in their time and place. What is influenced by them, and, pari passu, occupying the same milieu and subject to the same atmosphere of thought and action are all ready for change at such moments of cultural pressure. Activities influenced in such a manner may be said to have found and followed, as it were, a light, one apt, powerful in its expression, and locally symbolic. Surrounding activity makes of it a cultural centre, a stimulus to identification, a benchmark to emulate or oppose and against which to measure activity and thought, a beacon, a light.

A beacon amongst other beacons in other fields; the press, politics, film and so on with which this light interacts and interlocks in expressing the thoughts and feelings of the milieu in which it is situated. It and others contribute to cultural influence through this network of interlocking actions amongst which lights shine with influence by virtue of their legendary power, giving force to the effect of the social drama and producing an education of perception. Thus, the education of perception flowed from an at the time unspecified but felt pressure of discordance captured by events like La Mama and *O'Malley* thus creating the circumstances that gave rise to a social drama in the first place.

In the following Part, I will take up an issue in detail that has been implied throughout, namely, that in taking a position an ideological claim is made which cannot ever fully stand up to scrutiny of the actions taken. The idea of unacknowledgement begins the argument of the final part. With it, I will conclude the presentation of interlocking mechanisms that I have sought to exemplify through these theatre case studies. I will then discuss the end moments of the APG and Nimrod. In considering those moments, I will place their demise within the context of their ideologies, the claims they made and the fit of those claims within the renewed space of possible ideas. I will consider the ideas that descended from these companies; ideas that shaped the configuration of theatre in a city like Adelaide as discussed in Chapter Six. Finally, I will consider the significance of the change as a renewed perception for participants and patronage alike managed through the ritual effect of theatre.

PART 5.

LEGITIMACY.

The balancing of positional claim and responsiveness to changing circumstances creates continuing tension. Part of that tension as we have seen is to do with the disparity between statements and actions. Against this, discordances arise deliberately as in Hebdige's description of punk sub-culture. Each claim and corresponding set of allegiances requires mechanisms that allow action, suppress disagreement and preserve legitimacy. In this Part, we will see this balancing-out task in the context of the final movements of the lights, the APG and the Nimrod, and how the descendent ideas from these companies and the changes in which they were legends reflected in Adelaide. In that chapter, we will also see how the education of perception finds its limits within the currency of the space of possible ideas.

In the first chapter of this Part, I will explicate the notions of intersubjectivity and the unacknowledged. The former is constituted by the agreements we make between each other about the styles and norms of the groups to which we belong. That is, an aspect of the composition of groups is the intersubjectivities of individuals and how they are ordered by the ideologies of the group. We will look at how a good deal of this intersubjective agreement is unacknowledged. The latter is so because of the operational need for these norms and styles to be unacknowledged. This unacknowledgement sets up the conditions for disparity between statements of belief and actions intended to secure position. These unacknowledged intersubjectivities form the mundane basis of much of our interaction. I use the term unacknowledged since it conveys a sense of deliberation. In the chapter, I also consider patterns of action that, through unexpected causal loops, can produce results quite different to those claimed.

As the unacknowledged part of our agreement allows us to act in one way and speak in another, the ideology we espouse does not have to agree with the action we take. Rather it has to perform the purpose of maintaining the claim to, and hold over, the positions we occupy.

This part then proceeds to look at how, in differing ways, the APG and Nimrod were unable to move beyond the definitions they had created for themselves. The final part of their stories was marked by crises of legitimation. Whereas they had been at the forefront of change, at the end, while they still marked out the ground of the ideational change, they themselves could not find a niche that would make sense of their ideology and at the same time satisfy the economic imperative that hung over them.

Finally, I will complete the study of Adelaide theatre to show how these lights may have contributed to the shaping and legitimation of the theatrical constellation of the first half of the nineties as I described it in

Chapter Six. In this chapter, I will also record a sudden turn in this configuration taken by the STCSA. This was *The Australian Theatre*, as unexpected for Adelaide as it turned out to be short-lived. This twist at the end of the story describes a moment in the ongoing positioning amongst companies. As an exercise in occupying a niche in the space of possible ideas, it exhibits the clear use of ideology fashioned in the seventies and by an executive producer who had been a part of that flow, Christine Westwood. Her part of this story also brings us back to the core notion of the centres and rims of groups as they work for their position in the space of possible ideas.

In conclusion, I will present as a whole the series of interlocking mechanisms that flow from a consideration of the motivational power of position. Lastly, I will draw out some implications for future research that arise from this study.

Chapter 13. Ideology, Belonging and Legitimacy: the Contribution of the Unacknowledged to the Maintenance of Legitimacy.

How come he sees it and you do not?[216]

Habermas poses this as the prototypic question revealing "intersubjectivity".[217] Intersubjectivity refers to the realm of tacit, unspoken, commonsensical, 'taken for granted' agreement. This is the agreement that is evidenced by 'mundane reasoning'[218], where ideology has become part of the force of daily function such that it underpins the mundane, ceasing to be experienced as ideology and becoming commonsense. How mundane is mundane reasoning? What complexities of behaviour and social interaction does it mask?

In this chapter, I will examine what is unacknowledged in our interactions and how we go about 'unacknowledging'. We have learnt from our beginnings that belonging is self-preservation and that both conferred and learnt identity constitutes belonging. We are individual to the extent that the tapestry of relationships to which we belong contains our individual life-moment as one knot within a multivariate moment in the spatio-temporal weave.

To begin with, I will, with the help of Clifford Geertz consider what commonsense is. From this starting point I will look at how intersubjectivity establishes the idea of the unacknowledged as the realm where ideology becomes commonsense. Consciousness of the motivation behind interaction at this level is effectively lost to the commonsensical surface of communication. Transactions and situations are dealt with by reference to agreed, 'obvious' categories of 'mundane' perception, of code and of explanation.

I referred earlier to Fleck's idea of thought collectives as presented in the work of Mary Douglas (see on page 139).[219] Fleck's idea of the thought collectives will now help to build the picture of the unacknowledged. We will recall that thought collectives have centres and rims and that the defining work of the group occurs in the centre. The outer areas are characterized more by orthodoxy in regard to the ideas of the centre and dissidence finds itself ejected unless there is a mode by which the group

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216 Habermas, Jürgen, (trans: McCarthy, Thomas) The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Polity Press, 1984, p 13.

217 Ibid, pp 12-14 and elsewhere.

218 Ibid, p 13.

219 Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*. Routledge and Kegan, Paul, 1987.

can remake its self-definition in response to challenge. The interaction of the collective with others however ensures that paradox and conflict will contribute to redefinition. If the definition somehow rigidifies, the likely outcome would be the emergence of a social drama.

I apply this theoretical landscape to the actors and theatre companies within configurations of companies like the particular example I described in Chapter Six. The silent working of the unacknowledged is then exemplified through Douglas's use of the sub-surface operational logic of group cohesion, which she draws from Jon Elster. This is applied to a particular style of art collective. Finally, the discussion of the unacknowledged is applied to the process of position definition by theatre companies.

Commonsense

Geertz in discussing commonsense[220] and using the anthropologist, Evans-Pritchard's, study of Azande witchcraft by way of example, notes its cultural nature.

> *Take a Zande boy ... who has stubbed his foot on a tree stump and developed an infection. The boy says it's witchcraft. Nonsense, says Evans-Pritchard, out of his own common-sense tradition: you were merely bloody careless; you should have looked where you were going. I did look where I was going; you have to with so many stumps about, says the boy – and if I hadn't been witched I would have seen it. Furthermore, all cuts do not take days to heal, but on the contrary, close quickly, for that is the nature of cuts. But this one festered, thus witchcraft must be involved.*[221]

What is important is that the notion of commonsense contains the idea of the obvious and axiomatic and disguises its cultural nature. Geertz is strong on this point, that witchcraft is only relevant when commonsense does not seem to apply.

> *Thus, however "mystical" the content of Zande witchcraft beliefs may or may not be. ... they are actually employed by the Zande in a way anything but mysterious – as an*

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220 Geertz, Clifford, "Common Sense as a Cultural System" in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. Basic Books, 1983.

221 Ibid., p 78.

> *elaboration and defense of the truth claims of colloquial reason. ... it is part of this tissue of common-sense assumptions, not of some primitive metaphysics, that the concept of witchcraft takes on its meaning and has its force. For all the talk about its flying about in the night like a firefly, witchcraft does not celebrate an unseen order, it certifies a seen one.*[222]

Any idea that becomes basic to a culture will act to protect the validity of all other ideas nesting together to produce cultural understandings. Witchcraft provides the cultural disclaimer that in this case acts to explain the unexplainable when commonsense precautions have been taken (watching for stumps) and commonsense expectations have been exceeded (healing has not occurred in a timely fashion). Witchcraft is commonsense and it is a measure of 'oddness' for this to be questioned.

Geertz raises as elements of commonsense its "naturalness", "practicalness", "thinness", [that is, plainness, lack of depth, complication or subtlety] "immethodicalness", (that is, its entirely ad hoc nature along with its refusal to require logical consistency: 'look before you leap' against 'he who hesitates is lost') and "accessibleness". Similarly, excellence in theatre with its naturalness, simplicity and accessibility of appeal, its practical appeal to basic and well-trained techniques and its usefulness as an ad hoc praise in its supposed presence or criticism in its supposed absence has these powerfully commonsensical qualities.

It will be recalled from Chapter Seven how excellence is used repeatedly as a justification for a hierarchy of arts practice. In that discussion I reported work that saw the community arts as work occurring outside the "elite valuing community constituted by the rhetoric of excellence" (see on page 126). This work is different work to that occurring in a state theatre company. It requires most of the same skills often applied in a different way and some different skills. The rhetoric of excellence referred to above is not applied in this field except to assume that the practices of community arts, if good at all, are at a lower level of excellence. In fact, such carving of niceties does not occur as it immediately leads to questioning the application of the term excellence.

To suggest an alternative idea as a way of forming a goal or understanding practice is to violate other nested ideas of commonsense value such as 'standards', 'higher education' and so on. We believe in ourselves as 'progressing' and excellence must apply to all we do to

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222 Ibid., p 78-79.

continue in this direction – surely we were always 'good', now we are better and with our excellence of outlook and practice the time will come (if it hasn't already) that we will be 'best'. Excellence appeals as a commonsensical and thus inalienable part of professionalism earning the Johnsonian response to its questioning (as Geertz recounts) "and that's an end on the matter!"[223]

Success in gaining and maintaining position presupposes success in making the claim to legitimacy for that position as much of a commonsensical given as possible. A position is strong if it can appear natural, practical, plain, comprehensible to all or most and resistant to questioning of any internal contradiction it may possess. Underlying though, is the necessity for unspoken rules to be transferred to the subliminal and unconscious in order to maximise the ideological energy available to defend the legitimacy of the position. It is in this sense that commonsense is inviolable.

Intersubjectivity

The question beginning this chapter, "How come he sees it and you do not?" does not question the "it". "It" is the supposed obvious, commonsensical and consensual explanation of phenomena. The quote instead questions the perceptual apparatus of the perceiver; the perceiver's prejudice, sanity or perceptual acuity.

It is in this realm of the mundane, where expectations are met and consensus as to what the world looks and is like is assumed amongst the membership, that 'situations' or problems are dealt with. It is this agreed, conceptually delimited space that provides the means for resolution of disagreements, managing resistance to compliance and determining the nature of the phenomenal world. Thus it is the point where somebody might object to what is obvious, usual, daily and natural that a 'situation' is remarkable and unimaginable.

What concerns Habermas and the critical theorists before him was the origin of the imposition of social control and then how that imposition played out at the person to person, group to person and institution to person levels. That situations do get dealt with attests to the attainment of these intersubjectivities and the forming of consensus through congruence of 'lifeworlds' (in Habermas's phenomenological terms) or, in other words, individual agreements amongst perceptions of reality. An underground

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223 Ibid., p 80.

element in our determinations arises since these shared norms can become largely unacknowledged. Rather than talking of an unconscious, the idea here is of an unacknowledged. This notion suggests an element of deliberation and choice, that momentarily we may be able to see through the natural and mundane and obvious to something that renders the natural contrived and artificial. Somehow we know what is motivating us but it is not what we are talking about.

What is unacknowledged? The struggle to maintain position has involved a crafting of identity in relation to the demands of a group consciousness. What we want is position and the identity and sustenance that flow from it. Let that want be the unacknowledged. What we espouse is rightness, i.e. the ideological justification of our space in groups and of our groups' space in society. Our espousal is intersubjective. We will then adopt the style that suits our intersubjective agreement and that allows the demarcation of personal space within it. Thus a punk style arises from an intersubjective agreement with a range of punk habiliments, for example, to allow the individual his/her niche in the group. The same applies to men in suits displaying their intersubjectivity while, between the lapels of their suits, their ties flower in wonderful and loudly proclaimed individual profusion delimited by the ideologically permitted range of the agreement.

Thus, according to, and differing with, each context in which they are found, both individuals and groups will stand for something. Both will develop mechanisms for protecting position; mechanisms especially that delimit styles. Style delimitation allows for recognition of like and for hierarchy within like. These delimitations provide tacit policies for inclusion and exclusion and rest on rule and taboo related appropriateness of action. There is affinity between the something that each stands for and the style that exhibits this something. For each, it is a matter of ideology formed within the commonsense of positional outlook, the fit with grouping, the available ideas within the space of possible ideas and the physical niche available for their expression.

Ideology allows us to cease to be merely territorial. Naked territoriality is clothed with rightness as proclaimed in our ideological position. A sense of rightness lends confidence and with that comes a sense of potency.[224] Without such a sense of right doubt afflicts selfhood and struggle is compromised. Thus, the spoil of the victor is position where ideology is legitimated as commonsense and power protects the hegemony acquired over the space of possible ideas. The congruent lifeworlds of Habermas that allow intersubjectivities to solve situations are therefore the subliminal

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[224] Gouldner, Alvin, The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology: the Origins, Grammar and Future of Ideology, The Seabury Press, 1976, p 67.

and defining constraints of groups. Each group in their quests to ideologically define and maintain their position within the space of possible ideas negotiates these constraints.

Thoughtful Institutions.

Mary Douglas's work on *How Institutions Think* throws this discussion into another light.[225] Her purpose in this book is to

> *attribute the inability [of sectors of opinion] to be converted by reasoned argument to the hold that institutions have on our processes of classifying and recognizing.* [226]

To achieve this task she invokes the work of Fleck and Durkheim, which she finds complementary. She examines the notions of solidarity and cooperation through their work.

> *For them, true solidarity is only possible to the extent that individuals share the categories of their thought.*[227]

Such categories are fundamental to their cognition, are not seen as debatable, and are, in fact, axiomatic to the maintenance of society. She quotes Durkheim contending that

> *society could not abandon the categories to the free choice of the individual without abandoning itself. ... There is a minimum of logical conformity beyond which it cannot go.*[228]

The categories Durkheim refers to are as fundamental as "time, space, cause, number, etc".[229] Douglas draws attention to his depiction of this conformity as necessary to, even responsible for, social cohesion. Durkheim did not take this view into the operations of individuals within industrial society since the 'sacred' bonds that allowed such thinking to occur in 'primitive' society are internalised within the individuals of 'advanced' societies. So that in modern times where economic transaction determines the social scheme, co-operation arises according to the imperatives of the transaction. Douglas draws on Fleck at this point.

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225 Douglas, Mary, *How Institutions Think*; Routledge and Kegan, Paul; 1987.

226 Ibid., p 3.

227 Ibid., p 8.

228 Durkheim, E in ibid., p 12.

229 Ibid., p 12.

According to Douglas, Fleck has no difficulty in transferring the idea of cognitive minima to groupings within modern society.

Douglas revives Fleck's idea of a "thought collective" that communicates by way of a "thought style". In his conception, the transformational drive of the collective is at its centre, the point where the style is founded and develops, while at the rim, the thought style ossifies.[230] Now thought collectives intersect so that the picture is manifoldly complicated. Centres occupy intermediary positions in other rims. Rims are centres for yet other collectives. Each thought style imposes its communicative rules upon its collective members. Each member wears the stylistic badges of a number of collectives' utterances and in their presentation of themselves during social and perhaps personal transactions.

Fleck's conception that transformational energy occurs at the centre while "ossification occurs at the rim"[231] appears at first sight to contradict the idea that transformational energy is more likely to be found at the rim of the space of possible ideas. My discussions of the significant breaks from past practice that occurred in theatre in the US post 1916 and in Australia post 1967 and particularly referring as I will in detail to the example of the APG provide examples of this transformational power coming from a part of the space of possible ideas conspicuously removed from the dominant centre. However, the two conceptions of group and space of possible ideas should not be confused. Further, though change can come from a de-centred part of a group, I argue strongly, as does Mary Douglas in adapting and building on Fleck's ideas, that this is unlikely and that the major predisposition of the energy of the group is directed precisely at this not happening. Rather it is directed at maintaining and enhancing its control over space. A necessary strategy in this task is to appropriate manageable aspects of change (and by definition the associated style) to incorporate at least the impression of change into the dominant set of ideas. The object of the strategy is to provide as complete as possible an explanation of, and style for, all categories of thought necessary for operation in a field and so justify the continued dominance of the prevailing group. The group is more likely to be defeated by a defecting power, as in the case of the Nimrod discussed in detail later in this thesis, than to change from within.

This cognitive basis for social bonds also operates for theatre companies. As they manoeuvre within their milieu, they portray themselves according to their various aims/ideologies. For example, Doppio Teatro and Junction Theatre Company portrayed themselves as multi-cultural theatre and

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230 Ibid., p 14.

231 Ibid., p 14.

workers' theatre respectively. These portrayals are stylistic formulations. In each, style(s) is(are) adopted that attempt to suggest the (in these examples: multi-cultural or working life) substance that embodies these aims. Therefore, these stylistic formulations are the cognitive tools with which they present themselves to their patronage to ensure their legitimacy and prolong their survival.

Durkheim's view that economic transactions determine solidarity, applies within this field when, for example, actors move from one company to another. However, the strength of the thought collective and its interaction with the financial imperatives of individuals must be taken into account. This accounting is necessary since the field itself vies for legitimacy with other fields and much of what is unacknowledged in the field is shared from company to company. Thus, the categories that are understood in this field persist from company to company despite the process of differentiation that is pursued between them. They become conditional for the field.

These categories amount to a long list in every field and each field converts into its own notions the fundamental categories that apply to all. What conditions are likely to be included as definitional in a field of professional theatre? Such a list would begin with the agreement that a set of specific conditions exist, conformity to which confers professional status and that economic resources exist and are able to be transacted that would satisfy these conditions (for example payment for an acting role performed). These might include a specific conception of where professional theatrical tasks might be undertaken and that training is required for technical and other skills necessary to those tasks. Further conditions defining professionalism might include union membership, a national and international perspective amongst directors, designers and writers, transferability of acting and other related skills between theatre, film, television and radio, recognition of existing high rates of unemployment and competence in varying methods of rehearsal.

The categories of similarity exist at the level of the field so when they contain elements that conflict within level, transactional problems appear. So for example, professionalism is a category that is operational at the level of this field of adult professional theatre. It is a problem for an actor if s/he cannot get a job, that is cannot complete a transaction within a field. If that actor attempts to work in amateur theatre, s/he immediately raises a question as to his/her professional status on the grounds not only of unemployment itself but also of the unprofessional nature of amateur theatre. Amongst other disparagements, amateur theatre is not regarded to possess the technical skills seen as a defining condition of professional status. In fact, the professional sub-field defines its difference from the

amateur sub-field on technical grounds as much as on any other. An appeal to the high rates of unemployment, recognition of which is a condition within the field, helps to address the first problem of legitimacy. However, legitimacy will again be questioned regarding the technical and other differences between these two sub-fields. Though this is an ideological difference, it is supported by an organisational infrastructure and a commonplace of activity that renders it commonsensical or self-evident. The transactional problem for the out-of-work actor, namely, how does s/he continue expressive activity while retaining legitimacy, is real but suppressed.

If a question of company ideology is raised to the status of a disputed category within a field then actors are denied the opportunity to move freely from one transaction within a field to another. If the field is large enough, then it will split into other sub-fields where positional manoeuvring not only occurs between theatre companies but between groups of theatre companies attempting to maintain the existence of their sub-field as an available space within which they themselves may manoeuvre. A theatrical milieu such as that in New York presents just this situation with Broadway, Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway, an interesting study in the light of this work. One need not cross the seas to discover this effect. One finds divisions relating to ideology within the field in Australia. At the time of this study 'jobbers' was a term given to actors who would do any acting task without either thought to its 'social' meaning or to the continued stereotyping of role that the task may bring.[232] The designation indicates such a sub-field split with consequent limiting of transactional opportunity.

The difficulty lies in the contestation of fields in modern society. What is understood by one is disputed by another and the level of subliminal attachments is thus more easily disturbed than that proposed by Durkheim in considering the 'primitive'. The attachment to a field can be thought, in both Durkheim's and Fleck's conceptions, to have a dual aspect: the attachment orders the world allowing it to appear more secure and controllable and, two, as noted, it has economic utility, i.e. it enables transactions[233]. Douglas's work is concerned with the former, the attachment; those cognitive processes of category agreement that occur within groupings of people and within institutions.

So individuals join groups and organisations that in turn explain and secure the world for them through the ordering categories they provide. These categories then enable the adoption of cognitive strategies with

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232 Fry, Garry, interview with Evelyn Krape, 24/8/1992.

233 Op. cit., Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, p 19.

which to maintain the continuing task of identification. Are these cognitive acts therefore also acts of identification?

For an actor, since the economic transactional purpose is not always satisfactorily available given the high unemployment in the field, to choose acting as an occupation may only represent security of identity. One side of what is transacted is the space for expression and only from time to time is that space financial. When the space is not financial the actor searches for opportunity to continue securing this identity. Receiving particular types of acknowledged training, for example, is a conditional transaction within the professional field. The use of co-operatives where a profit split is acknowledged as an in-lieu-of professional payment is another way of negotiating a professional transaction. These examples are easily seen as tenuous.

Therefore, the cognitive determination of one's validity, rightness or 'am'ness is a central task within any occupation whether banker, tinker, tailor or actor. Restated, a major reason for occupation is the derivation of identity; e.g. I = an actor, since within the field, belonging provides transactional possibilities conferring status, allowing attachment and precluding detachment. It is as though occupation is mediated through a cognitive process organised to avoid invalidity, wrongness, 'am-not'-ness and to justify position. A sleepless mental dividing process negotiates validity/invalidity, rightness/wrongness, 'am'ness /'am-not'ness. The dividing proceeds according to the categorical tools or conditions laid down by the field or organisation that confers identity. Provided one is adept at manipulating those categorising tools, this is the key to transactions within, and the authorisation of, space.

The categories of the field also directly define the nature of much of our intersubjective agreements such as those cited above that define professional theatre. They also will govern associated intersubjective agreements such as the nature of the foyer talk and norms of in- and ex-clusion of various intra-professional groupings. By placing this notion of categories within the meanings of commonsense and ideology presented here, we may appreciate that this intense identity-concerned cognitive activity flows from an ideology about professionalism that itself is contained within a commonsense notion of what is or is not excellent. Professional theatre like all other fields is a constructed institutional meta-identity based on ideologies justifying its claim to expressive/economic space in the space of possible ideas.

The space we are talking about was once topographical, pristine of ideological division, and fallow for occupation by ideas. Occupation is a cognitive, space-determining act. The invasion of ideas had to precede

the first step on new land; the space of ideas overlaid the pristine state and topography became geography.

The constitution of thought collectives varies, of course, distinctively. The collectives that arise through employment, domestic, social and other human agglomerations place varying levels of compulsory allegiance on members therefore exerting varying degrees of conformist pressure with regard to thought styles. The extent of compulsion is not necessarily to be equated with the extent of conformist pressure. Individuals belonging to a sub-culture will expect other institutions of which they are also members to accept or at least not contradict sub-cultural thought styles. Naturally, they will adopt an array of strategies that aim to diminish the possibility that the institution may confront the thought style of their other sub-cultural memberships.

Notably, Mary Douglas draws on Fleck's notion of thought *style.* The notion of a style of any kind implies a surface or a pattern. It does not imply insight. On the contrary, it suggests habitual modes of thought behaviour and, when married with the notion of a thought *collective*, it implies *shared* habits of thought that are mutually reinforcing.

Mary Douglas was concerned to achieve Durkheim's aim of producing sociological explanations for social behaviour. She also wished to find explanation that, while allowing the condition of individual rational choice, adequately explained collective action. She eschews "dipping at will into the psychological level"[234] as much as she does arguments that explain collective social behaviour by the enforcement of complex systems of reciprocation. These latter arguments invoke coercion as an ultimate explanation and are for this reason essentially reductive. This and other reasons drives her to search for a deeper explanation of group survival.[235]

> *The current, more sophisticated, anthropological record shows these small-scale societies as never static, nor self-stabilizing, but being built continuously by a process of rational bargaining and negotiating. The categories of political discourse, the cognitive bases of the social order, are being negotiated*[236].

Here we arrive at a space, an area of contestation or, at least, negotiation where individuals and groups, having purposes, must in some fashion assert and defend their claim to the space in which to carry out their purposes. Further, their assertion must both maintain their position in the

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234 Ibid.

235 Ibid., p 22.

236 Ibid., p 29.

field against others and be ready to usurp the membership of others if survival of their position demands it. In this assertion, the appearance of a cohesive field of endeavour must be upheld despite the competition within it. Actions and assertions cannot be construed as a betrayal of the field or the worth of the activity that defines it.

Overt attacks on other members of the field need therefore to be couched in terms of an individual's inadequacy or unsuitability for the field rather than there be a perception that the field itself is inadequate to the productivity expected of it. Fields themselves, after all, only appear and are only sanctioned as parts of larger meta-identities such as, for example, the arts and education. That is any limited resource space, continually readjusts the quantity of resource, funding for example, available to each field. Each field must look to itself.

Douglas enlists the work of Jon Elster to produce an 'intentionalist' understanding of social group cohesion aiming to update the theories of Durkheim and Fleck. She quotes and then employs his logical arrangement of "conditions that a correctly argued functional analysis must meet"[237]:

In brief, the conception provides for a series of conditions operating amongst the group, its institutional patterns of behaviour and the functions members set for their group. Given these conditions (see Appendix Two), it is very unlikely that group members appreciate the precise link between the group function and patterns of behaviour associated with membership of the group.

Thus, for example, a threat to withdraw from a group has the effect of producing weak leadership, which then protects individual members of the group from 'unwelcome demands'. Satisfied by this effect, the 'threatening to withdraw' behavioural pattern is reinforced and weak leadership becomes entrenched[238]. Douglas deploys this analysis to offer a sociological explanation for belief systems. This is important, she contends, since:

> *Instead of using the beliefs to explain the cohesion of the society, we have used the society to explain the beliefs ...* [239]

Douglas then adduces further cycles of behaviour, effect, cause and function. Each cycle interacts with the others, so that the weak leadership produced by one cycle interacts with another that relies on behaviours

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237 Ibid., p 33.

238 Ibid., p 38.

239 Ibid., p 40.

emphasising equality, reinforces strong group boundaries and so reduces exploitation of group members. Together these produce further effects ensuring that the only sanctions available against what the group considers deviant or exploitative behaviour where weak leadership reduces the rule-making and -keeping ability of the group, is an accusation against "incipient faction leaders of principled [sic] immorality". Since there is a significant cost in exiting the group, the sanctions can work despite weak leadership.

What Douglas demonstrates is the complexity of group function and behaviour patterns. Once the principles of action become habituated and sanctioned, and behaviour is established with key results for group and so individual positional maintenance, then the urge to acknowledge what is actually going on will be systematically stifled.

Such intersecting cycles can reinforce what may appear to be deleterious patterns. Observations of the professional theatre field in a less clearly demarcated 'professional' theatre scene than in Adelaide demonstrate these effects and apply to most theatrical scenes in larger cities especially at the fringes. Accordingly, actions, signals and statements signifying the possession of 'artistic integrity' reinforce claims to belonging in groupings of fellow actors at the fringe of professional theatre. Satisfied by this effect, the successful bonding has the effect of intensifying a penurious existence dependent on meagre income flows. This behaviour pattern is consistent with the high unemployment that is a feature of professional theatre.

It may be objected that the penurious existence is the initiating behaviour and the claims of artistic integrity are justification. This is not the case. The cycle starts with the desire for a particular belonging, the position. A corollary of this is a mutually reinforcing cycle operating between the field and its funding support. The acceptance of small income makes the dispensing of greater numbers of grants of smaller amounts by the funding authority easier. Despite the perpetuation of a penurious existence, this peppering of grants makes them appear more broadly distributed and so is politically beneficial.

The group, with boundaries intact and penurious identity in place, is not equipped as a group to improve its financial position. In fact, these behaviours lessen the strength of forces acting to improve its economic position such as, for example, union activity or technical development. Further, once a field is differentiated by its income source and especially where income is small (eg in this example of professional theatre), then income derived from other sources becomes problematic for group membership. Therefore, acceptable income can only be income sought as

professional involvement and the further it moves away from this and/or dilutes the integrity of the craft style, the more membership is questionable.

Those enmeshed in these rhetorical positions are unlikely to recognise these behavioural loops under mundane circumstances and are certainly unlikely to acknowledge them. They are intersubjective agreements, habituated in style and patterns of interaction and reinforced by the fear of ostracism. The identities in part supported by them are formed on the desire to operate within a particular niche that is defined in this case by the ideology of a profession. The specific behaviours that bring the group/thought collective into existence flow from this.

It is at this point that we find ourselves in the realm of something very like Douglas's intersecting cycles. This field has weak leadership and determines its boundaries by processes described above. It then maintains them by insistence on equality. The insistence is affected by invoking the conditions of professionalism (the ideology) as a critical stance against members who may be seen as diverting from the behaviour expected of membership. In essence, accusations of betrayal are made or implied. The fact of low financial gain and the constant prospect of shifting funds from the funding authority also ensures an atmosphere where there is an, in essence, shared belief in suffering as an expectation further consolidating group cohesion.

Members of the field may infer threats and members have the power to manipulate threat themselves. The fear of constriction of one's expression is secondary to the fear of curtailment of one's selfhood since for the continued conferment of identity it is necessary to turn up on the right side of the group's dividing function in order to be able to operate at all. There is a choice to leave the testing ground of one field and move to the tests of another but one can easily see that other tests will apply.

Individual personalities may aspire, of course, to freedom from the constraint of such identity. Countervailing factors such as recognised excellence in craft, financial power or political power may be brought to bear towards this aspiration. Nevertheless, in their absence the response to fears must be engagement in a suite of other strategies aimed at maintaining equality in the field. These will include misreport, close observation of field boundary or accusation of betrayal of principle.

The group's power to divide manipulates two currencies: the capital of belonging in the first place and the opportunity to operate within that belonging in the second. The fear of misreport, of accusation of betrayal, etc., will constrain one's expressive actions and so constitutes an attack on one's identity. Nevertheless, once the similarity function has conferred

identity, the individual is able to manipulate that capital by constructing selfhood. These are the circumstances in which selfhood is at once compromised, that is by the constraining effect of group membership, and at the same time expanded, by the space for expressive opportunity membership confers on identity.

In this chapter, I have considered the unacknowledged in our actions and the patterns that necessarily arise to preserve our personal positions vis a vis the legitimacy priorities of the group. In the next, we will return to the final moments of the APG and the Nimrod in the light of the embeddedness of ideology. With these companies, we will see that it is the rigidity of definition and the extent to which it defines intersubjectivity that can contribute to a failure of relevance within a transforming space of possible ideas.

Chapter 14. Legitimation Crises.

Each conflict a theatre company experiences may be understood from many overlaid angles. To each conflict, there are at least the dimensions of personality, politics and rhetoric. Each can disguise the other but in pursuing the idea of legitimacy to explain the positioning and posturing of theatre companies, it is the rhetorical style representing the ideology that is deployed overtly in the political struggle. The rhetoric is also indicative of the manner in which an ascendant group will strive to maintain or renew the legitimacy of a theatre company. The problem is that once established, a style is difficult to overturn. Gradual adaptation is possible but fundamental change is likely to require greater power than these companies could find.

Both the Nimrod and the APG ran into financial difficulties that highlighted definitional dilemmas. Other crises occurred for each as well yet companies that were not facing profound threat may well have weathered these more easily. The loss of Ken Horler from the Nimrod under acrimonious circumstances and the divisions about employing an ensemble at the APG are examples of these. In this chapter, I will consider the major events that marked the twilight of both companies. I will do this particularly from the point of view of the definitional problems each faced. This consideration goes to the central ideas of identity, style and legitimacy and their meaning with regard to positional claims.

I will conclude the chapter first, by surveying the ideas that descended from these lights; what ideas they spawned in the field of theatre, the practices that survived them and the style of theatre governance that was legitimated by their activity. Finally, the chapter shows how operations of the theatrical ritual that correspond to Turner's observations of rituals of affliction can manage transformation towards an education of perception without the schismatic effect that can accompany a social drama.

Both their gain of position to begin with, and then its loss, marked a series of events that, as we have seen, Turner termed social dramas where social breach moves to crisis, redress and reconciliation or split. Their coming marked a social drama for the field whereas the social drama of their passing was internal. Their coming represented a process of breach with the established aesthetic and the companies that dominated the space. What followed was a crisis for that established hegemony, the redress for which was not available within the hegemony as it existed in either Sydney or Melbourne. The crisis that to begin with presented as a schism, worked itself out over a decade and a half through the work of the Nimrod and the APG. As I have shown in the last chapter, a new hegemony surfaced but with a different configuration while retaining a style

heavily influenced by the work of the Nimrod particularly. There, I referred to it as the Nimrod style. In actuality, though this was its influence, in governance, placement and patronage it was more of an elite centralism towards which the Nimrod tried to move but which turned out to be unavailable to it.

Cornered by Their Definition.

> *... alternative theatre by wedding itself to a rhetoric of perpetual revolution, diminished its ability to solicit further support predicated on values of continuity;... this in turn forced a bubble into the bloodstream of Australian drama that not only divorced artists coming after from those who had gone before but, in a more profound sense, left New Wave practitioners alienated from themselves, floating free and without place, unsure of the value (and perhaps the existence) of their past efforts, faced only with the flinty option of starting all over again – only this time older, less fashionable and less well supported.*[240]

Ultimately, successful growth culminated in the Nimrod's serious contention for the position of premier theatre company in NSW. However, in 1979 a Sydney Theatre Company was set up with John Clark, the long serving head of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, as a custodial director until the position of Artistic Director was filled. The Nimrod still stood high in the esteem of Sydney theatregoers and continued to rival the fledgling state company as the premier outfit until ideological dissension within the staff, combined with a financial crisis resulted in the new Sydney Theatre Company assuming that position and the Nimrod struggling to shore up its own. It did this by another move, which proved to be its final step, to the Seymour Centre, a difficult of access large theatre centre within, but on the outskirts of, the grounds of the University of Sydney.

Over time, the Nimrod had come to look like a more 'conservative' theatre than its genesis might have suggested. Even so, it was the Old Tote Company at the Parade Theatre that was stamped with the conservatism of articulation, style and programming. The Nimrod swept this away with its commitment to bold style and programming. This could not be ignored and was not ignored by the newly founded STC that defined its offer of

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240 Op. Cit, Meyrick, p 17.

"first-class theatrical entertainment" as "grand, vulgar, intelligent, challenging and fun".[241]

As we have seen, the APG occupied a different position in the Melbourne configuration. Early in the APG's history, two of its luminaries, David Williamson and Graham Blundell, left. Such departures and the growth of Hoopla had the effect of marginalising the APG and, were it to consider alternatives, leaving it little other niche to occupy. In April 1977, Jack Hibberd resigned, stating personal reasons and the need for a "complete break". He wanted it to be low profile, realising that political mileage could be gained against the Group. He maintained connections and offered first look for all his plays.[242]

The APG always operated as a collective and one of the defining characteristics of its operation was the complexity it had to develop to run its affairs in a manner that respected the collective and yet could work efficiently. This profile meant that the company could never really contest the sort of position Nimrod could. In the mid seventies in Melbourne, the Hoopla company was formed by the departed Graeme Blundell (along with Carrillo Gantner and Garrie Hutchinson) out of, as Radic reports "impatience and disaffection with its two Melbourne rivals, the MTC and the APG"[243]. Later to become the Playbox Theatre, it came to occupy the same position in the Melbourne constellation that the Belvoir came to do in Sydney and that the Stage Company did in Adelaide during the eighties. Its stylistic positioning was similar to that of Nimrod with its polished 'radical chic' (to employ the Tom Wolfe term). Playbox adopted an almost all-Australian programming policy.

The APG was defined into a corner. The rigour of its outlook reduced its opportunities. The collective constantly monitored the accuracy of the representation of the APG profile in their product and the integrity of their profile was scrutinised against the underlying liberationist principles they espoused. The Collective Programming Meeting of 3rd September, 1978, exemplifies this practice. At the meeting it was suggested that plays might be programmed that had found their impulse in activities around May Day such as *Days of the Commune*. It was also noted that in terms of balance *India Song* was "the only serious play about a woman in the Front Theatre" during that year. *The Unknown Industrial Prisoner* was suggested as "a good example of the chaos of late capitalist modes of production". However, it was argued that this shouldn't be done "if it is a mainly male

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241 Op. cit., Radic, p 169.

242 Collective Programming Meeting 7.4.77; held in the Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, MS11436, Box 4, Collective Programming Minutes.

243 Op. cit., Radic, p 169.

cast". John Arden's *Non-Stop Connolly Show* was suggested as a "fully developed piece of agit-prop theatre. Rich theatrically and politically."[244]

The APG's continuing success with strong products and offshoots such as Circus Oz and the continuing adherence of enduring talents such as John Romeril meant that it would not simply fade but remain a force and a light. However, its effectiveness as a light was reduced or rather its beam narrowed to areas specific to left leaning theatre.

Relations with the critics were dotted with stress and even crisis. Terence Maher, a Publicity Officer for the APG attributed poor relations to misunderstanding arising through "lack of communication" and proposed to let the critics know more fully about APG processes. Maher describes the APG as seeming to "people outside the ghetto with no experience of working collectively" as having "a very, very complicated organisation and method of working".[245]

John Timlin, contrastingly, tended to go into bat for the APG and against the critics, generally pointing out not only inconsistencies in their treatment of the APG as compared with other companies, but especially errors of fact with regard to the group. For example, with reference to a Brian Hoad article in the Bulletin of the 19.9.78, Timlin writes:

> *To claim, as Mr. Hoad does, that we remain "defiantly squalid" in order to "appear" working class is arrogance and ignorance. We desperately try to upgrade facilities in a 150 seat theatre urgently needing renovation and extension, but, given that 63% of our expenditure goes on providing an average income of $90 per week to our theatre workers, this is not possible without specific capital grants. Perhaps at that level, mate, we are "working class", we simply are.*[246]

Timlin criticised Hoad for separating Australia Council figures of in-theatre activity as opposed to touring and other external. Hoad's tactic allowed him, Timlin complained, to adversely compare the APG in theatre activity with that of the new Hoopla company . He points out that the APG policy was always to move beyond the Pram and into the community, taking theatre beyond "the mere 3%" who attend "main" activities and to

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244 Ibid., Collective Programming Minutes, 3rd September, 1978

245 Report from Terence Maher to Planning Committee of APG, 31 October 1978. Held in the Australian Manuscripts Collection, La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria, MS11436, Planning Committee Minutes Book, Box 4.

246 Ibid., Letter from John Timlin to Brian Hoad, 20.9.1978.

"make records, radio programmes, produce television and film in search of maximum exposure of work to those who may not be able or interested to step inside the government-funded cultural edifices expensively provided for their educational and economic superiors".[247]

During the late seventies both companies went through a period, as did much of Australian theatre, where it was felt that the drive had gone out of the 'renaissance' and that things were feeling stale. It was more a feeling than an actuality. The fact was that both the APG and the Nimrod continued to mount extensive programmes, the quantity of Australian writing both happening and being produced was increasing and the size of audiences had consolidated. Truth is, these styles, which had been so exciting and new, were no longer so.

Australian plays were no longer a slightly chauvinistic novelty. That they continued to draw fewer crowds than well-known foreign plays meant that the economics of staging them were difficult to balance and so, with almost no exceptions, large casts became harder to justify. This progressively placed greater demands on the histrionic skills of all from playwright to director and actor. The spontaneity of the task, the rough and tumble of the earlier times seemed remote but somehow what remained did not feel like the high plateau of achievement that might have been expected.

The APG's Final Moments.

Even near the end of the APG's life, minutes of a special programming meeting of the 5th May, 1980 was called to discuss 1981 programming and demonstrates continuation along established ideological lines. The meeting surveyed possible current areas of issue that the group felt needed to be portrayed including multiculturalism and gender relations. After much debate, it proposed that the 1981 programme should be "based around an integrated set of informing ideas" and "Loss of personal liberty", "Power and authority in Australia" and "Work"[248] were adopted. The ideology that defined the APG was not a subject of debate.

The debate leading to this resolution focussed on the relation of such guidelines to the possible resulting work. They wondered whether

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247 Ibid.

248 Ibid., Programming Committee Minutes envelope, 5 May 1980.

guidelines guided work or constrained it. [249] Representation of the groups' ethos therefore remained foremost among their motives despite the threat to their space and a now well-established alternative '2nd tier' company in the Playbox Theatre Company. The APG was now defined into a corner and stayed there.

These 1980 minutes show the collective operating as always discussing their 1981 season. At the same time, they urgently prepared to avert a seemingly inevitable downfall. It is noteworthy that Chris Walsh, the Drama Project Officer with the Victorian Arts Department at the time, is reported in the minutes several times as suggesting that the APG's submissions to the government for support in buying the threatened property would be enhanced if the APG were to find a private sponsor.

> *Chris suggests we investigate private backing. Many large business organisations are looking for investment opportunities.*
> *We [the suggestion continues] need to do solid P. R. work. Show in any press statements that we are seeking private funding. If we succeed in finding any private backing it would greatly reinforce any proposal that we put to treasury.*[250]

Though the collective minutes at which the above was submitted do not refer again to this suggestion - not even to rebut it - a subsequent outline of a "proposed submission" is intended for both the government and "private sources".[251] It is unclear from the archives whether a submission went to a private sponsor. Even so, when the possibility of inclusion in a new commercial complex envisaged for the Pram Factory land became real, the response was to recognise the compromising nature that such inclusion may well have meant and to search for new premises.

Wider actions were taken. A "committee raising money for the public campaign for the purchase of "a building" existed, composed of at least Philip Adams (and John Bryson, Phillip Gardiner, Peter Corrigan and Jill Robb) all of whom met on at least one occasion at Timlin's place.[252] Such inclusions and the existence of this committee denote the continuing strength of the APG and its position as a leading light in theatre and, more precisely, a formative cultural organisation.

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249 Ibid.

250 Ibid., Planning Report to APG Collective, 10 April 1980.

251 Ibid.

252 Ibid., Building Report to APG Collective, 21 April 1980.

From 1980 on, all deliberations of the group took place in the midst of the uncertainty about the continuation of the Pram space itself. Though Timlin from time to time reiterates the distinction between the APG and the Pram[253], clearly the identity with the space was a factor that weighed largely in the future thinking of the group. The point was that the APG, while powerfully associated with a particular political ethos and with activities and offshoots, such as Circus Oz, which had grown well beyond the Pram, was still synonymous with the Pram as a location and as a cultural heart and icon. Given the legend that had grown up around the Pram and given its placement in Carlton, with all that meant in terms of the intellectual beat of the time, the task for the APG of effectively moving to another space and dissociating from the present would be difficult. Ultimately, however this task was considered.

By the 21st of April 1980, the need for the 1981 grant application to be formulated was upon the group. Since no determination about space was likely before the 15th May when the application was due it was decided to formulate it on the assumption of a similar, if not the same set of spaces, offered at the Pram location. The guidelines for this application included a continuation of the ensemble into 1981 but with "a more equitable distribution of funds available to non-ensemble projects" which could be enabled in various ways including a smaller ensemble budget and by earning "more money".[254] There were doubts about the advisability of the ensemble and a concern is here expressed that the ensemble reduced the opportunity for activities in the now 'traditional' APG manner. Yet there was not a sufficient groundswell against the ensemble approach. Somehow, the 'ensemble' approach had come to express so much of the ethos and style of the APG.

Finally, the land was auctioned. Some resolution with respect to the space seems to have been found following the auction. The developers clearly discussed the possibility of a theatre or theatre facilities within the new complex and rental tenure for the remainder of 1980 and probably 1981 seemed secure. At the 16th June meeting, this had been reported but discussion proceeded as to whether this avenue should be followed or new space found.[255] The Victorian Arts Minister was, at this stage, giving tacit and interim financial approval.

At the meeting of 18th August 1980, the APG discussed the adverse affects on public consciousness of the Pram following the auction. The following comments at that meeting suggest that the APG were very aware

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253 Ibid.

254 Ibid.

255 Ibid., Collective Meetings 16th June and 21st July 1980.

that they were in a corner, that their position, while probably ideologically consistent, might well have become pragmatically untenable. Richard Murphett expressed the problem as a

> *... need to define our audience more and our area of operation within theatre.*[256]

Ursula Harrison defined the problem in terms of the city's theatrical constellation:

> *We compete with other theatres to our disadvantage - people go to the Last Laugh and Melbourne Theatre Co because they want to - Last Laugh for food and booze and MTC are subscribers [sic].*[257]

- and suggested promotional solutions cognizant of this observation:

> *Back to freebies and mailing lists. The mailing list is slack - we do not send to people who can pull people eg. social secretaries etc.*[258]

Jo White reacted to these suggestions, accepting the constellation thinking but reflecting on the APG's place and ethos in comparison:

> *We cannot model ourselves on the MTC - we must find a definition for ourselves, we don't have a drinking licence nor a subscription audience.*[259]

Flowing from this remark, suggestions for redefinition included an idea for "specialist development theatre" and another for "more populist theatre".[260] Questioning of the collective itself had gone on, raised by Timlin. He had stated that the "collective should be disbanded and a company of limited liability formed".[261] Timlin's suggestion was met with some horror and questioning of his mode of operating occurred.

Interestingly, pasted into the minutes book with the minutes of this meeting, there is a letter from the owners of the property confirming, "at this stage", the occupancy of the APG till "at least December, 1981" and a

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256 Ibid., Collective Meeting 18th August 1980.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid., Collective Meeting 20.10.80.

proposal to offer the APG first option of theatre facilities in the new redevelopment.[262]

Discussion of the building situation came up at the next meeting. Other venues were possible and could be looked at. Timlin had some ideas and negotiations were in train regarding this. Richard Murphett made the central comment with regard to the question of identity this raised:

> *It will be a weird feeling being here in a multi-million dollar complex and still trying to maintain our brand of anti-establishment politicised theatre. Are we going to try and appeal to the trendies?*[263]

A feeling of having lost contact with the grass roots appears, with "the community around us".[264] The meeting went on to look at disbanding the Collective and forming a company. Despite a sense that the APG was losing its raison d'etre, the drift seemed inevitable as much because "the collective", Timlin later stated, "was not operating with that sort of drive and commitment anymore".[265] For the APG, a 1981 season didn't happen and the Pram Factory became a shopping mall.

I will now turn to the legitimacy crisis at the Nimrod and its demise before looking at the legacy of each.

Rhetoric and Legitimacy: Crises at the Nimrod.

In the crises that transpired at the Nimrod in the early eighties it is useful to observe the rhetorical constructs within the ideological debate. Thus, the rhetorics of 'empowerment', 'voice' and 'access' came into confrontation with the argument of craft.

What I am calling the argument of craft is a feeling that existed amongst many of those associated with the Nimrod that a broad harmony of political outlook existed already which informed programming, casting, world outlook and the governance of the company and that the leadership was expected and trusted to act on this ethos. Given that this trust was in place and was reciprocated, which over the years many felt it was, then the actors, designers, directors, techs and all the theatre workers involved could give their attention wholly to their craft. This attention did not need

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262 Ibid., page following above.

263 Ibid., Collective Meeting 17.11.80.

264 Ibid.

265 Ibid.

therefore to reflect upon any political implications that could be adduced to what they were doing. This did not mean that the actor, director or designer, in creating a production, did not have political considerations within what they were doing but that the programming and casting had already ensured representation of a particular outlook. The application then of, say, the actor's method, which includes, of course, discussion relevant to the themes and characters of the play, would amply satisfy the (legitimating) need to express that outlook. Broadly speaking therefore, no more proactivity than craft was felt to be needed within governance that maintained the agreed political outlook.

I have called their outlook 'liberal humanist'. The liberal humanist viewpoint evolved and was reinforced in the discussions, associations and alignments of everyday life and in the programming and style of the company itself. A symbiosis had evolved over the years between a 'left'-leaning, educated theatre-going class and the Nimrod. Yet that class included many who felt that political involvement required greater proactivity than this outlook allowed and that proactivity had to be a part of all activity if social goals were to be attained. The ethos of the APG can be recognised in this attitude. The liberationist cause, as reflected now in the many sectional causes that sprang from it, challenged the 'complacency' perceived by the more radical left amongst the liberal humanists. Their cause required that the programming and every aspect of the operation of the company should reflect a politically interventionist style.

Crises affected the Nimrod ultimately leading to its demise, one of them leading to the resignation of Ken Horler, one of the founders. However, the major crisis was a financial crisis while another involved a serious questioning of programming rationale.

During 1981, it became clear that Nimrod was not making ends meet and that, in the event of income not substantially increasing cost savings measures had to be imposed. In November 1981, a company meeting was held concerned to establish methods of reducing costs. A number of well-known and respected playwrights attended this meeting and the discussion focussed on alternatives to a proposal to close the Downstairs theatre.

The discussion veered away from this topic and to a difference of opinion about quality of leadership. Notes from Chris Westwood and Sue Hill under the subhead: "leadership" indicate this:

> *We think that the purported divisions in the company (certainly not in evidence at the Friday meetings) is a fantasy generated to disguise lack of enthusiastic leadership at Nimrod. ... To us,*

> *it seems that lack of confidence in the future and in the theatrical strengths of the company (represented in "close down" and "retrench" suggestions) is undermining any path forward and cutting our own throats.*[266]

Chris Westwood had been the Education Officer at the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and took up her position at Nimrod not long after coming to Sydney. Westwood occupied a vocal liberationist position that she took into her position as General Manager of the Belvoir Street Theatre, which succeeded the Nimrod into the Surry Hills space[267]. She possessed firm convictions that theatre programming should reflect these liberationist goals and worked towards such an outcome at the Nimrod.

The above statement avoided mention of any ideological difference that may have been operating and so invited the executive to acknowledge staff solidarity (the reference to the Friday meetings) and therefore its differing view as to the company's direction. The debate was then framed to place the liberationist objective in alliance with a possible "enthusiastic leadership" and with the "theatrical strengths of the company".

Westwood was attempting to develop a women's programme echoing the success of *Betty Can Jump* at the Pram and this was resisted as not attuned to the patronage at the Nimrod. However, this argument now had some difficulties since the Nimrod seemed to have grown beyond its income base especially as the Sydney Theatre Company had now been established. Westwood's argument was rhetorically liberationist and aware of the possibility of a new positioning being available which may even have turned out to be pragmatic. Subsequent events may have proved her right if one considers the success of the Belvoir Street Theatre and the demise of the Nimrod. It may also have been the case that this debate and the skirmishing that led up to it contributed to the destabilisation of the Nimrod's positioning.

The goal in conflicts like those at the Nimrod is control of expressive space, of controlling our theatrical means of expressing our view of society, of controlling the presentations according to a targeted position. The grail is the space where we experience the ritual either of interpreting, preparing and presenting a transitory and fragmentary simulacrum of life, ie rehearsal and performance, or of witnessing and then of emotionally and intellectually reflecting upon it, i.e. audience reception. There is power

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266 Nimrod Company Meeting Minutes, 6 November 1981. Held in the Wilenski Library, Sydney Opera House.

267 Westwood was also a central organising figure in the purchase of the building by theatre practitioners.

in controlling the preparatory ritual though the power is dependent on the influence and the desire to influence of the patronage[268].

The ritual of creation and preparation determines what is witnessed. However, whether it is witnessed, and so remains within the space of possible ideas, depends upon an interaction between the attunement of the company to the evolving outlook of its patronage and its (the company's) persuasive power to affect that outlook. The offering of personal expression, validation and recognition will be the influential factors if the offering is well attuned. If the company's work is well attuned, or if the patronage can be persuaded that it is, then the company has provided an approbation of personal and group identity.

If we have a confrontation of rhetoric resolved with a new or altered definition then the nature of the ritual within the liminoid space changes along with the legitimating form and attitude applied to the content material. The basis of the existing legitimacy is therefore threatened. Therefore, the first battle is over the right to determine the style of the company. That is followed by a test of the legitimacy of the victor. That is a test of form and style with which the content is presented and whether it successfully engages the needs of the patronage.

This debate at the Nimrod brought the two broad new theatrical ideologies, which I have termed liberationist and liberal humanist, into direct conflict in rhetorical terms. Such a debate within a 'light' was a sounding board or exemplar of the then current debates between the progressive centre and the fringe areas of the space of possible ideas. A liberal humanist consciousness was pitted against the new idea of 'access'.

The Nimrod's last years came with the move of the company to the Seymour Centre at Sydney University. Though the last General Manager, Robert Love, avowed the continuing audience success of the company, the move effectively took away its claim to legitimacy.[269] The move reflected, it seemed, the existence of a claim that it rather than the Sydney Theatre Company should occupy the premier position in Sydney theatre. It attempted a name change at this time to Nimrod National Theatre, a re-positioning attempt that clouded the true basis of the company's legitimacy that was still summed up by the Surry Hills building and the Young Mo symbol. Its sense of keenness and brashness set against an unbending establishment retained its adherents and if size of operation and aspiration meant that the Surry Hills space could no longer command the capacity to

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268 Patronage, we recall, is all sources of resource support. In this field, all sources of resource support include audience, sponsors and funding authorities.

269 Interview with Robert Love, 15/10/1992.

fund such an operation and aspiration, then it may have been that the aims were out of sync with the hopes.

When the Surry Hills space was threatened with demolition a movement grew within the theatre industry itself that was able to buy the building through the purchasing of shares and so the Belvoir Street Theatre took over where the Nimrod left off with a two-company structure. Company A owned the building and Company B mounted the productions; the theatre space could not be threatened by the failure of a show or season. Company B at Belvoir inherited the position of the lean and keen Nimrod in the Sydney constellation.

Unlike the APG, the Nimrod attempted to change but did it too late and, in any case, got it wrong physically and symbolically. Nimrod 'grew' into a corner and marginalised itself losing its legitimate basis, its claim to the broader cultural definition that is inherent in the operation of a light. In the subsequent scene in Sydney, Belvoir Street Theatre became that light. The purchase of the building and the setting up of these companies constituted a seminal event. It was a governance event and denoted the ownership of a theatre and so a significant position in the configuration of the space by practitioners themselves. Its programming and style of operation reflected this meaning. The 1988 season for example was entitled "Radical Classics" capturing precisely the intellectual and cultural aspiration of its educated audiences. The Belvoir represented a culmination (for the Sydney constellation at least) of what had begun with Nimrod and farther away with La Mama and the APG almost two decades before.

The Descendent Ideas.

The APG's strength came with its position at the forefront of the sea change, its prodigious output and its attraction to artists of high calibre. It was and remained a light for all forms of political and radical theatre. Such theatre is significantly part of the constellation and belongs in the space of possible ideas because of its now traditional power to command patronage from government, audiences and other areas such as the union movement as we saw with Junction Theatre in Adelaide.

One could say that Nimrod was more astute in occupying a position within its constellation that could stand the test of pragmatic survival. My belief is that it squandered that position and that the Belvoir Street Theatre inherited it and was representative of it within the space of possible ideas. It appears that this 'second tier' position existed for this culture in the larger

geo-polities during at least the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Was the Nimrod direction after all more appropriate for a 'second tier' company than the politically single-minded APG? The Playbox makes an interesting comparison here for it filled that position. However, in doing so it adopted a less radical and more eclectic style. As abovementioned, it took a risk with its all Australian policy but its style as a company sat well between the 'establishment' of the MTC and the 'fringe'. Its eclecticism of style was constrained only by the liberal humanist ethos similarly to the Nimrod. Like the Nimrod, its appearance was rough-hewn but polished out of the old Carlton brewery adding the heritage interest close to the hearts of its audiences.

Between them, the two companies 'spawned' legitimacy. They brought the Australian accent to the fore and substantially added to making multiculturalism a legitimate subject. They each favoured and fostered Australian writers and writing championing them internationally. The APG made political theatre a force and although the Nimrod did not go the same route, it did not shy away from political statements, as was the case with its championing of the prison playwright, Jim McNeil, and of its support to the indigenous theatre movement.

Both companies were concerned to review the Australian way of life in their work but were anxious to do this in popular forms where possible and to make their theatre accessible to a larger and more diverse audience. The APG in particular tirelessly sought methods to get their work beyond the front door of the theatre as Timlin's reply to Hoad above shows (see on page 259). They brought circus into the theatre and put the larrikin into the circus. They showed us the ocker and through him our Australian selves and then revealed his pain and the pain he produced and rebuilt our picture of ourselves in its darkness and its light.

Though the APG rejected the classics per se and this was not their forte when they supported this work, they supported accessible new interpretations that captured an Australian heart within their universal appeal. The classic and particularly Shakespeare were the grand recreation of Nimrod in their lively bold interpretations often replete with Australian accents.

Each company through its actions as a light legitimated a series of practices that had been unusual in this country previously. Through the APG, the ensemble approach to performance was fully popularised in Australia and became an accepted and often revered method of actor participation in devising and presenting plays. This was so despite the contention surrounding the APG's own ensemble. The Nimrod too,

especially through its association with the Performance Syndicate actors who performed *O'Malley* and John Bell's production of *Macbeth*, was conscious of, and fostered, at least an ensemble feeling within the company.

In its own way, Nimrod too encouraged a worker participation approach to at least the day-to-day running of the company. Actors employed for single shows and all staff were welcomed at weekly company meetings where their views and responses were sought. Ultimately, as we saw above, this worked against them when the oligarchic nature of the governance of the company was tested by reference to the Friday meeting. It was as though this gesture legitimated the sense of collectivity as a mode of governing operation. Many companies attempted with varying degrees of success to operate in this fashion. It was attempted and legitimised as part of the liberationist practices of the time.

Of course, it was the APG that upheld the collective approach only allowing questioning of this style of governance in its last months. The APG maintained the policy though it was complex and difficult. The policy was probably responsible for the breadth of the work and the extent of innovation. It allowed many voices and sought to accommodate many visions. In the end the APG became a by word for participatory theatrical practice and administration. Whether a model to be eschewed or embraced, it was a necessary benchmark especially for any company or group espousing a left leaning or radical cause.

The lights provided a legitimating ethos to a wealth of new and amended practices and attitudes. Their great moments, performances and personalities became legends that lent luminosity to the vision they represented. Their legendary power gave a national theatrical movement strength and the attunement of their thematic and stylistic choices united a patronage that gained cultural integrity through their activity. The creation of this nexus between practitioner and patronage produced a fundamental change in the currency of ideas and so the space of possible ideas significantly and irrevocably shifted and the nature of Australian cultural capital was redefined.

The story of the APG in particular exhibits an overt desire to regulate through moral concern the actions of humans and their groups. Though this dimension is mixed with position all the time and is relative to the scale and proximity of the activity, a theme of moral engagement appears in their story. Moral purpose is an axis of action for groups. It is a standard of legitimacy. What the standard is may always be contested but a sense of, and an appeal to, morality often underlies it. The difficulty for groups is that moral engagement cannot only be a force for adherence and stasis

but it can also be an agency of transformation and transcendence. Like commonsense, moral engagement is an appeal that reflects an alternative ideology anchoring itself to our unacknowledged ideological justifications of position.

Renewing the 'Way of Seeing'.

In discussing the aura of a work of art, Walter Benjamin, as alluded to in Chapter Twelve, is speaking of a feature that is lost with mechanical reproduction. This feature, which arises in the authenticity of an art work, has its place in a particular historical moment, its belonging in an original time and space and has a traditional artefactuality.

Benjamin focuses on the loss of this feature, the aura. He states that the argument at the advent of photography as to whether it could be said that it was art was not an argument. He states that the real point was the revelation contained in this highly reproducible technology; namely, what it implied about the state of the society and about the destruction of the aura contained in a work of art.[270]

The significance of this point is that the aura is part of the ritual significance of art objects in other times. Its breaking down is therefore denotative of a social state.

> *... the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence.*[271]
> *... if changes in the medium of contemporary perception can be comprehended as decay of the aura, it is possible to show its social causes.*[272]

Likewise, Benjamin notes the irreducibility of authenticity in the original and our separation from such when in the presence of the reproduction (the photograph, the phonograph record, etc). Is this alienation? Yes it is, of a kind. However, it is also the release "of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual".[273]

What replaces ritual? About film, the masses, who view it in a distracted state, are Benjamin observes, experts. This mechanical reproduction steps thereby towards the politicisation of art and Benjamin notes the

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270 Op. cit., Benjamin, pp 223-224.
271 Ibid., p 222.
272 Ibid., p 222.
273 Ibid., p 224.

coincidence that photography arose "simultaneously with the rise of socialism".[274] He sees that art:

> *Instead of being based on ritual ... begins to be based on another practice - politics.*

Benjamin's argument is that mechanical reproduction can also be a disalienating process. Photography and the film have changed our relation to our own perception. We see what was only vaguely viewed before. Our apperception is renewed and Benjamin is facing up to this fact and seeing its social consequence. As the photograph first transferred the aura from the work of art itself to the face and its "fleeting expression"[275], the subject of the photographic portrait, then the potential for social change could be charted.

Our way of seeing has altered. It is no longer suffused with reverence, our way of seeing is now practised and expert and does away with mystery. It ceases to be the kind of mystery where we are caused to stop and meditate and becomes instead a politics where we are caused to speed up and become more alert and sharp in our maintenance of space or alternatively that we shut down and become inert to the multiplicity and rapidity of image.

It is as though the world of mechanical reproduction perceived by Benjamin brings about change that can contribute to new awareness. Benjamin's view posits a growth and broadening of perception, an unshackling from the rigidity of rituals made in a former iteration of the space of possible ideas and that have become unsuited to managing the tensions of the present form of the space. Technological change has wrought a corresponding change in the way we read our sensory impressions. We may extend from this and note that similar effects occur in our conceptual tools that change with paradigm shifts and new contingencies.

The liberating experience of loss of aura, for those who have been caught in the folds of traditional mysteries and symbolism, is the experience of stepping into a new disalienated identity. Benjamin's citing of the ordinary filmgoer having the understanding to be expert, is an image of an individual with a newly awakened responsiveness to their life environment. The ideological hegemony is displaced and there arises an opportunity for new ideas to populate the space of possible ideas with new niches for, in this idealised perspective, renewed expression. The shape of the space

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274 Ibid., p 224.

275 Ibid., p 226.

has altered and opportunities are thereby created. Yet the space will find its bounds and the positions will be limited. Groups will form to enable the expression and individuals will vie with each other for position in these groups. The task of avoiding alienation does not recede.

Managed Transformation and Liminal Spaces.

Yet the significant change we have tracked also demonstrates liminoid activity acting on a critical problem in the community psyche. It is this that enables the social dramatic process that Benjamin records as a loss of aura. Turner's 'rituals of affliction' enable the possibility of a managed transformation. They provide for both society to accommodate to the individual and for the individual to assimilate the demands of the status quo. Social transmission and transformation occur in many ways that are outside the control of group processes, however Turner's work points to one of those areas where control may be exerted.

Turner observes an untidy process in these rituals. Their content is not predetermined though the space and general progress are. The space and the progress then are facilitative where there is an indeterminate nature to the outcome. There is the possibility that contained within the individual affliction is the germ of a social accommodation that can transform social practice and so remove the affliction. Equally, the process attempts to assimilate the individual to the social, neutralising the afflicted behaviour.

> *For ritual is pre-eminently concerned with the health of the corporate body, with securing balance and harmony between its parts, which are groups, categories, roles, and statuses, rather than individual men and women.*

Such a process attempts to control an outcome, not by prescribing it but by allowing new content to arise that will induce an outcome concomitant with, as Turner styles it above, "the health of the corporate body". The attempt aims for a managed transformation that secures "balance and harmony between its parts".

Nevertheless, hegemony is difficult to shift. Naturally, one protects ones positional gains. In our story of theatre companies, the Nimrod Theatre looks to offer a 'managed transformation' whereas the APG seemed to offer too radical an alternative for a transformation to occur. Instead, the

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276 Ibid. p 270.

hegemonic powers adopted enough of the APG's 'threatening' style to limit its portended transformative effect.

On the other hand, Nimrod was not a radical threat. It was largely stylistic in its difference and concerned with autonomy and difference rather than democracy and the structures of power. It provided a scale of transformation that was socially manageable. The style it offered could therefore be adopted and lead a transformation.

The work of these two companies, the Nimrod and the APG, provided both a renewed conceptual index for theatre of the seventies in Australia and stylistic templates into the nineties. They grappled with the mystiques of the preceding paradigm, releasing a pent-up frustration with the irrelevance of styles such as the elocutionary English expected of actors. The APG/Nimrod phenomena exemplify on a contemporary national scale the establishment of a new perception that established a new legitimacy.

Chapter 15.

Position Change and the Education of Perception: Back to the Adelaide Configuration.

In this chapter, we return to the configuration of Adelaide theatre of the first half of the nineties. I will consider the legacy of the eighties and the APG/Nimrod styles that preceded this. Particularly I will consider the position of the STCSA during this period.

The STCSA attempted a radical repositioning at this time by renaming itself The Australian Playhouse and reprogramming according to this rubric for an intended five year period. Though lasting two seasons, it may not have passed its first year had the processes of season development not been well advanced and had there not been a sentiment of waiting and seeing. The venture does take us back to the pressures of configuration and how they bear on the styles we adopt to position ourselves. In this case, the venture also demonstrates that a particular legitimating strategy, championing Australian programming, which had been and still was at that time a successful strategy, had found its limits.

Present Vacuums ... and the Past

During the mid 80s, two other major companies were active within the professional adult theatre scene in Adelaide. One was Troupe, the immediate progenitor of The Red Shed. The other was The Stage Company, which was not succeeded by a like company and can be said to have left a vacuum in the early nineties, the filling of which I suggest was an important factor in the dynamics surrounding the configuration of theatre in Adelaide at that time.

John Noble, Co-Artistic Director of the Stage Company who was chairperson of the Australian Drama Festival in 1981, captured the flavour of theatre expectation then. With a rousing finish to his Chairperson's Statement, Noble stated:

> *The time is ripe to firmly establish a uniquely Australian style of theatre.*[277]

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[277] The Stage Company archive in Adelaide Festival Centre Trust Performing Arts Library.

Again, Program Notes echoed the style with the resounding aphorism:

> *Go on, 'ave a go!*

Here is the recognisable rhetoric, even the reference to "style" with its relationship to ocker colloquialism. This is accompanied by the need to include the tautology of "uniquely Australian" a use of words few of us would find uncommon in legitimating rhetoric.

The statement also draws attention to the rationale of the first festival in 1979 as having been

> *to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first performance of the first play written about Australia by an Australian*

The programme drew companies from all over Australia including Troupe, the Stage Co and the APG, with the exception of the flagship companies although STCSA presented a devised piece by David Allen and Ariette Taylor (lyrics: Enright; Music: Glenn Henrich).

This festival like others and especially the biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts, represented Adelaide's belief in itself as a centre. The co-ordinator's comments on program development reflect the issues based consciousness of the time and the approach that was taken to comprehensively attempt to get a spread of different background groups across the issues - women's, ethnic, and indigenous theatre, for example.

The Festival turned out to be broader in scope than expected. A stated aim of the Association of Community Theatres for the Festival expressed its central concern for broad representation in Australian theatre:

> *to celebrate the emergence of indigenous Australian Drama and foster its development.*

The absence of more 'mainstage' work except for local theatre tended to underline both the orientation of the Festival, the absence of representative flagship work and the demarcations of the time.

Troupe described themselves in the ADF program in the following ways:

Within the graphic outline of a shark:

> *Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the theatre ....*
> *- Troupe is a democratic collective.*
> *- Provocative home grown South Australian theatre*
> *- Established in mid-1976 Troupe quickly rose to prominence*

for its contribution to new Australian drama, and high quality of its acting, direction and design.

Troupe influenced the style of the Red Shed and contributed to the atmosphere that had allowed the aesthetics and ideologies of the others to find an accepted place in the theatrical milieu of the first half of the nineties. What was this style and what were the politics? From where did they spring and what was the character of the theatre they produced?

I have discussed the significance for Australian theatre of the work of the APG. The APG championed an approach to theatre the direct spin-offs of which were the increased legitimacy of, and so funding for, a range of alternative theatre forms. These included community theatre, workplace theatre, street theatre, social issue theatre, theatre of iconoclastic content and style, of opposition to the military-industrial state, satiric theatre, larrikinish, vulgar theatre in celebration of Australianness, theatre working within and through challenging environments or theatre with challenging structure, style and content. The style was born of Grotowski, Chaikin, Peter Schumann and the student and liberation movements of the sixties. The waves from the APG crested around the country.

In Adelaide, they broke as Troupe Theatre. Frankly left wing in a run-down warehouse, rough and committed to liberationist ideology, Troupe pursued theatre along similar themes with similar styles to the APG. They interacted from time to time sharing material and people, style and content. David Kendall cites the significance of the APG for Troupe as follows:

> *I'm sure that what was happening in Melbourne was something of an inspiration to Troupe, from the casting of their plays to performing them.*[278]

However, Kendall sees any inspiration as then filtered through its own cultural proclivities. In this case, he notes that Adelaide is very "directo-centric" in a way that the APG was not. The APG never saw directors as important to the mix. This came from the intensive work on acting on the one hand and the strength of the writing on the other. In this regard, Kendall's view was that Adelaide was more influenced by a Sydney approach where the director was significantly more important. Despite the direct inspiration to Troupe from the APG in this respect, it retained a different ethos.

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278 Op, cit., Fry, Garry, interview with David Kendall.

Like the APG, Troupe was fed with personnel from a University, in this case the Flinders University of South Australia then run by Wal Cherry who had founded and directed the Emerald Hill Company in Melbourne. Jules Hollege, for example, a Flinders Drama Centre lecturer, spent two years as Troupe's Artistic Director.

Troupe finally lost its support but the mantle passed almost immediately to The Red Shed. Playing mostly in the same building, this ideological daughter of Troupe in content was determined to strike out in distinctive directions stylistically. The Red Shed had a fondness for rough spaces that became a hallmark remoulding them into a manner of low life beauty and so adding a very distinctive feature (for Adelaide) to their style of work.

The Red Shed then is not simply explained by sectional group legitimacy. Though it appealed to a stylistic avant-guard in Australian theatre, it also had an overtly political character pursued in a raw, contentious and intensely committed acting style. By the nineties, however such a content and mode of acting often needed elements of style to leaven this fare and thus the challenging and engaging use of space and, sometimes like Junction and Vitalstatistix, an overt use of a different style – mystery or Grand Guignol would appear from time to time. It also retained its supportive feeder school at the Flinders University. This and the fact that broadly, non-sectional and left viewpoint practitioners and theatregoers support the existence of this kind of theatre provided the group with its legitimacy.

With a longer perspective of the gradual change in the space of possible ideas, it is interesting to note that by the 2000s, the Red Shed style of avant-garde rough theatre had lost much of its political edge. For the Red Shed as for Troupe and the APG before them this had been a central argument of their ideology and so of their style and therefore of their legitimacy.

The Stage Company, however, which had disappeared at about the same time as Troupe did leave a vacuum. Its disappearance and the audience it seems to have left in its wake appeared to still exert an influence on the shape of theatre in Adelaide as of the early nineties, and there existed a dynamic at this time within policy that can at least in part be explained by this vacuum.

The Stage Company appealed to a politically left of centre, younger, educated section of the community. They are the group for which Troupe and after it the Red Shed were too rough and uncomfortable in style, politics and even venue to satisfy, but were sufficiently attuned to the sounds and shapes of new cultural nationalism and the issues that went with it to wish for a theatre company that would reflect those proclivities.

In effect, the Stage Company was to Troupe as Nimrod was to the APG. As with the disappearance of the Nimrod so in Adelaide the disappearance of the Stage Company left a market in its wake with no natural satisfaction for its theatre-going desires.

It was commented often that there really was not an audience for the Stage Company that in fact it was in competition with the State Theatre Company. There may be truth in these speculations and that the audience share of the Stage Company did not ultimately justify its survival. However, that sector of audience exists and has been a strong if not the strongest factor in the legitimation of an Australian theatre ethos during the last generation. The argument with regard to competition with the State Theatre Company could well be seen in a different light bearing this in mind. That is that the offerings of Troupe and The Stage Company are in fact complementary in most instances. Conversely, State companies and those like the Nimrod and the Stage Company do operate much of their programming within similar audience brackets. It is the existence of a fervent bourgeois nationalism and sense of style that has given the 'Nimrod' style companies a place. This was continued most remarkably in Melbourne with the Playbox Theatre.

In the late sixties, the state subsidised 'flagship' companies, as they came to be known, such as the STCSA were seen as a largely moribund receptacle of British work and classics with a nodding indifference to local aspiration. Acting style and particularly accent was largely borrowed and British and the pervasive atmosphere was that of veneration for a 'mentor' culture. Public mood had become impatient with this cultural imposition and so a new content, style and flavour inevitably emerged.

For the flagship companies, survival meant incorporating this challenge or dying out eventually. The clientele of these companies swiftly began to shrink towards an older section of the community while the young professional classes supported the new lions of theatre. In Sydney, the flagship company of the time, the Old Tote, went to the wall and the competition became an aspect of theatre throughout the country.

The answer for the flagship companies was to broaden their programming. A breadth of programming in several theatres marked the Sydney Theatre Company, which replaced the Old Tote. This policy enabled the companies to operate different house styles and so to pursue several sections of the market at once. In Adelaide, a similar policy was pursued in the different venues of the Festival Centre. Increasingly, the tendency has been that the alternative company, which threatened the established theatre to begin with, was confronted with a lack of comparable resource dictating a thriftier but still available policy in the space of possible ideas.

By this time, this generally dictated (whatever the desire), a policy of Australian only or comparatively 'chic', 'risky' or aesthetically 'radical' work. The Belvoir Street Theatre, for example, which inherited the mantle of the Nimrod theatre in Sydney, exemplified this ethos in the aforementioned title of its 1988 season "Radical Classics".

Likewise, for Adelaide, The Stage Company had this struggle, which it ultimately failed. Its legacy can be found existing in bits and pieces scattered throughout the Adelaide theatre scene such as project-funded productions at Theatre 62, a small theatre in the western suburbs of Adelaide not far from the city centre. in so far as this is the case, what it represented is demonstrably not satisfied. Some aspects of the stylishness and chic aesthetic radicalism of The Red Shed may be experienced in a similar vein as the work of Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney previously mentioned but for the most part the content and the programming are vastly different in appeal and aesthetic purpose. Thus the programme of The Stage Company, as an important balancing factor in the Adelaide theatrical constellation, was significantly absent.

Changes for the STCSA

Towards the end of 1992, changes were in the wind for the STCSA as it was experiencing box office and other financial pressures. As a state company, the STCSA must always look to maintaining its dominant position. A recognition of the pressures both market and ideological that come from 'below' in the socio-economic spectrum is inevitable in this maintenance of position. Inevitably, change will come in some form of response contingent on these and other factors.

So a distinct and discrete season of three plays were staged early in 1993 by the STCSA of Australian plays directed by local directors, featuring local actors on inexpensive budgets. Financial pressure on the STCSA itself dictated a move legitimated by a reference to these factors. Further, the season within a season was staged at the Lion Theatre a small bleacher-seating style theatre within the Fringe complex. The placement again perhaps dictated by financial factors but the relationship to something riskier and therefore more vibrantly part of the 'progressive' edge of theatre was part of the positioning strategy.

A more remote and largely unlikely movement that had been rumoured at the time was of an Adelaide Festival Centre Trust takeover of the State Theatre Company. Though this did not eventuate, there is an ironic significance contained in the perceptions that accompanied the rumour. Such a takeover would have the conservative tendency of taking the

STCSA back towards the elite culture view of Adelaide itself. In such a situation, Ken Lloyd's diagram (see on page 109) would then reveal in the centre the Stage Company vacuum even more tellingly. The fulcrum of policy making both in government and in the companies would then become very aware of the unsatisfied market in the middle.

The then General Manager of the STCSA, Robert Love, intimated in conversation the possible replacement of his position by a CEO subsuming both his position and the then Artistic Director, Simon Phillips. This person would be something of a producer.[279] Love's speculation at the time indicated his awareness of position and the machinations that were possible. The AFCT, he believed in amused keeping with the rumour, would have their eye on the STCSA. A subsumption of the STCSA by the AFCT would not be beyond the realms of economic and artistic rationalisation. Nor would it be beyond the ambition, vision and ability of the AFCT's top people whom he considered to be quite sharp to discern and scrutinise all options including takeovers.

However, it was his first speculation that eventuated. Clearly, the board were interested in trying something new. South Australian, ex-Belvoir General Manager and our character from way back at the legitimation crisis of the Nimrod Theatre, Chris Westwood, became Executive Producer

The Perception of Position and the Role of the Normative.

The STCSA during the period under review shows a company audaciously experimenting with position. In 1995, the then Executive Producer, Chris Westwood, took, in view of the company's policy up to that point, a radical decision to programme all Australian works. The launch of *The Australian Playhouse* with a large attendance for this 'city of lunches and launches' occurred with the usual understandable and justifiable hyperbole. Despite this, the subterranean rumblings in the industry expressed the feeling that the venture was not a sound decision. Before it started it was seen to fail on the basis that it did not take sufficient stock of the patronage base upon which the legitimacy of the company stood.

Inhabitants of a field readily perceive position. The Australian Playhouse departed from the normative position that the STCSA had not only worked towards but for which it had been moulded over years of legislation, influence and experience. That experience had included the

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279 Op. cit., Fry, interview with Robert Love.

'pushmipullyu' between the company board and its various directors and the other interested players such as the Festival, the Theatre Guild, The Flinders University Drama Centre and so on. Despite these pressures and the direction changes that sometimes resulted, there remained a practical stake for all concerned in the maintenance of the STCSA's position.

Thus, a defined expectation of the company's position had long been part of the culture and the perception of the field. The definition, furthermore, was constructed in terms of fundamental expectations. These included: fully staffed productions observing union conditions supported by a full range of technical and artistic departments, comfortable audience venue and facilities, eclectic programming and 'stylish' programme, promotions and decor. The normal operation of the field depended on the expectation of the STCSA occupying this position with this definition.

Not that this position came without resentment, envy and dissent. The STCSA absorbed a large slice of the available funding. With that funding, it kept within bounds that were often felt to be too narrow and representative of neither the breadth of content nor the style that theatre 'should' be offering. Its domination of funds, resources and personnel meant that it was enabled also to set the standard of craft in the industry. Thus, the STCSA could attract that large slice of the patronage whose theatre going carried with it a high demand for comfort including an attractive smooth finish to the product. A fine and polished finish in every department had to characterise the product; the product had to be 'stylish'.

Beside the resentment sat the expectation. The STCSA was work for good craftspeople in every department and a standard for the industry. Even when the standards fell below expectation, the comparison would at least include the expectation of standard that a company such as the STCSA *should* achieve. In this way, the normative was the STCSA and it therefore formed the predominant perception of craft standards in all departments for those who occupied the field. A nervous appreciation of the STCSA style and the nature of its operation existed in the relations amongst inhabitants of the field. Any deviation from this perception of STCSA style resulted in an excitation of response of a magnitude comparable with the perceived deviation from the normative position. Thus in the picture of the space of possible ideas of this period the STCSA rightly sits in the central position.

The Australian Playhouse had the potential to threaten this position. Nevertheless, during an interview with Chris Westwood in August 1995 she offered some compelling justifications for her decision. The STCSA did seem to be a company under siege. Westwood spoke of competitive professional seasons from both the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and a

(as it turned out) once-only season at the Arts Theatre mounted by a commercial management. She saw the company as rejected by the subscribers and at risk from the "take-over mentality of the AFCT (Adelaide Festival Centre Trust)". She had seen the need for "a more conservative '95" but now had a new submission before the board in the light of the 94-95 experience.[280] This submission became The Australian Playhouse.

South Australia had not recovered from the collapse of the State Bank and the related economic misfortunes of 1991. Simultaneously the development of funds to tour shows from interstate added to the international possibilities of touring spin-offs from other festivals around Australia and enabled the AFCT to develop its World Theatre subscription series. The STCSA faced difficulties and its subscription base was dropping. Chris Westwood did have a problem to solve.

Ambition Confronts the Paradigm.

Chris Westwood did have a problem to solve but she also had an ideological outlook to serve along with an ambitious vision of the scale of success she envisaged. Having been General Manager at the Belvoir Street Theatre a few years earlier she now

> *wanted to do things bigger and better than Belvoir.*[281]

The Australian Playhouse was a niche positioning and a survival exercise. Without a strategy, Westwood could have found difficulty in maintaining the company before a perceived possible concerted takeover push from the AFCT. She was clearly suspicious of the motives of Rob Brookman, then the Artistic Director of the AFCT, and others at the AFCT and was certain of the motives of Ian McFarlane, General Manager to Brookman, with whom Westwood was very impressed.

The strategy she chose expressed her own political desires. In this, we can see an individual positional identification operating. These desires, she maintained, included an often-expressed desire for Australian theatre to have its own showcase. She saw this venture as a "gallery".[282]

Certainly, Chris Westwood was faced with a falling subscription base, she was faced with competition and a changing theatre outlook. Yet we do

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280 Fry, Garry, interview with Chris Westwood, 16/8/95.

281 Ibid.

have here evidence of a personal vision that radically altered the outlook of a company and had a potentially destabilising effect on its position. To what extent can the circumstances then facing the company be said to have determined her decision or to what extent were they a justification for making a radical shift in company policy?

The evidence we have is of a personal vision that stood in contradistinction to the style of the company. The company had, and had placed upon itself, a tradition and an expectation of a mixed programme; classics, international modern works of acclaim, comic work, new and classic Australian work. Part of that expectation and tradition involved radical moments and there are sufficient examples of these under past directorships, in particular the "Lighthouse" period under Jim Sharman. At that time, the Board had once again deliberately sought a directorship that would lead an innovation in style on stage for the company. When the company first moved into the newly constructed Playhouse in the Adelaide Festival Centre, the directorship of George Ogilvie had also been seen as offering innovative direction. In these cases, the style of innovation concerned differing approaches to the actor's craft, a sense of the aesthetically 'new' on stage and a selectivity in programming which had the potential for thrill and surprise (though within the established bounds described above).

Even these innovative periods were controversial though not always because of the programming. In the case of Ogilvie, the period seemed to have been marked by concern as to the quantity of the output. This had dropped in favour of an ascetic routine of actor training which kept the actors away from the public eye for a greater period than the expectation allowed. These actions questioned the legitimacy of the company and so positional concerns were excited.

The company had been formed out of a nexus of the established amateur theatre in the city, conservative commercial showmanship and political support from Labor governments in particular. Experimentation and innovation were always acknowledged as part of the brief but, despite this, their occurrence caused a nervous reaction. However, previous innovation did not threaten the overall co-ordinates of the programming platform. Though Westwood's Australian Playhouse seasons attempted a similarly eclectic shape, the stamp 'Australian' delimited the perception of variety. Westwood's vision, if not discordant, was at least, therefore, incongruent with the expectation.

The previous director, Simon Phillips, had assiduously fulfilled and delighted the expectation. Phillips provided the eclectic programme but sought to do it with daring. His productions aimed to provide central

images of grand and radical clarity around which he built an interpretation. His *Julius Caesar*, with female Marc Antony set in a modern corporate boardroom where the ghost of Julius appears as a distorted black and white video image and the battle of Philippi rages as a cyclone of paper, is a case in point. So was his *The Comedy of Errors* presented as a Magritte canvas with bowlers and umbrellas beneath an enormous hanging green apple and a suspended grand piano. Though Shakespeare lends himself to these treatments, Phillips also brought similar boldness to modern work. Criticism could have been levelled at some lack of rigour in the follow-through of interpretations. For example, the battle of Philippi as a paper storm, though a clever image, was just a paper storm and the meaning of the paper in relation to the play was not as cleverly wrought as the broader image of the boardroom. Yet, such rigour was not part of the stylistic mix that expectations seemed to demand. The eclecticism, daring style, sense of newness and the director's odd socks were the successful mixture.

Chris Westwood was called upon to follow this act and despite the pizzazz of the Phillips period, the company was suffering the economic malaise of the times and the growing competition. Perhaps he had been more daring than the patronage could stand after all. Perhaps the more predictable fare of John Gaden who preceded Phillips was still closer to the mark. If this were so then the comparisons available amongst Gaden, Phillips and Westwood tell us much about the tensions in the patronage itself.

It is possible to track Westwood's outlook and action plan back to its influence within one of the legend companies under review here, the Nimrod as discussed earlier, and onward to the Belvoir Street, as above mentioned. Once again, parenthetically, any significance is speculative and maintained on the basis of at best a few interviews and the personal observations and experience of the author. The interviews and the observations, when studied and organised, have informed the conclusions here presented.

By what route did Chris Westwood come to this position? Chris started out in Adelaide and spent some time as education officer at the Festival Centre before moving to Sydney where she was centrally involved in the Women and Theatre project at the Nimrod Theatre. This has been the subject of some discussion earlier in Chapter Eleven. She was a crucial personality in the formation of the Belvoir Street Theatre and became its General Manager. During that period, she saw the Belvoir policy as championing liberationist attitudes. After a stint with regional ABC and Radio National, she then took up the position at the STCSA. In her first year she was concerned that the more conventional and expected programming featured many aspects that continued the liberationist approach she had encouraged in the Belvoir policy.

There is a consistency of attitude displayed through this thumbnail of Chris's involvements. It is clear that she was prepared to bring those approaches and attitudes fulsomely into her role at the STCSA. The persistence of the 'identity' argument with regard to Australian theatre and the opportunity such an approach offers for Australians to pursue the liberationist causes suggests how the Australian Playhouse grew out of this approach. Nevertheless, it also appears as a 'stamping of one's mark'.

It is hard not to interpret this trajectory in terms of the liberationist moral engagement etched out in the sixties and seventies and championed at the APG. Though an ideology, the point we have seen with the APG is that it felt its identity attached as to the margins though it had opportunities available to exploit at the end, that it felt uncomfortable about exploiting. In a sense, the positional struggle brought with it a moral dilemma where the identity achieved through the group could not be sustainable along the paths offered. This is the moral dilemma of the young people dealing with the implications of Chelsea's story. Is it what we see in Chris Westwood's trajectory? The interpretation is at least invoked but the nerve to be "bigger and better than Belvoir" indicates something else or at least something mixed.

Tradition, the Paradigm and the Education of Perception.

Why did Chris Westwood's attempt to educate the perception of the patronage to accept the Australian Playhouse not achieve the objectives set? This education project was probably socially impossible from the outset. As we have seen, a diminishing subscriptions base required attention but the option selected seemed to have more to do with her stated ambitions than to an appraisal of the content comfort of the patronage. Yet, her plan contained aspects that attempted to address this concern. Unlike companies such as the Playbox in Melbourne and the Griffin in Sydney, both of which also had an all-Australian approach, she departed from their policy in that hers was to be a revival of Australian classics programming unlike the new play policy of the Sydney and Melbourne companies. In this, she demonstrated an awareness of the traditional elements of the content sought by the patronage. She also carefully ensured that the craft standards of the company were maintained and even enhanced.

Even so, the option she chose was narrow and attempted to reinvest the 'legend' of Australian identity in the theatre. In launching the plan, she hoped that it would impress with its radicalism while achieving greater

saleability through its traditionalism. Yet unlike the Belvoir Street Theatre 'Radical Classics' subscription season where, at the time, Westwood presided as General Manager, which attempted a similar blend of opposites, The Australian Playhouse was neither. The radicalism of the all-Australian season mounted by a flagship company was justified as classical and what had become traditional (i.e. the action of avowing Australianness as a posture) in fact constituted a departure from radical positioning, a departure that could not be sustained.

The departures that have been a part of the evolution of the STCSA had to do with the nature of the art and the way it is stylistically dressed from the aesthetics of design to the training of actors and the shaping of acting companies. Programming decisions have also seen departures but even the most radical remained within the brief of world as well as Australian theatre.

Westwood had always been in the avowed position of education for social change and from her new position of relative power decided to have a throw at using it to change the shape of the space of possible ideas by throwing her company fully forward towards, and even into, the realm of Derring-do. She attempted this at a time when the company's grasp on resources and its grasp on the central position of legitimacy had been attenuated. In doing so, she chose a pathway that did not directly threaten the smaller companies in terms of content but did in terms of a general sense of catering to a mostly contemporary, certainly national and definitely politically liberationist style of operation.

The paradox is that, if she threatened the smaller companies at all, it was not this that would ultimately affect them. Rather her decision from the outset created contradictions for the perceptions of her own patronage and a sense of disjunction between the position that such a company should occupy with a building to satisfy that expectation and the position into which it was being steered. This sense of disjunction accompanied her decision from the beginning despite its embrace at the launch by the conservative arts minister, Diana Laidlaw, and other notables including David Williamson. The launch was large and attempted a full-scale justification of the venture. Yet the attempt could not last against the pressure of expectation ranged against it.

Conditions for an Education of Perception

The shift in the established aesthetic in Australian theatre in the last third of the twentieth century denoted a change in approach to artistic production. Considering Benjamin's points alluded to earlier from *Art in*

the Age of Mechanical Reproduction we can observe that a loss of the 'aura' contained in the art of the preceding period accompanied this. Complementing these is a shift in appreciation to a new range of content and to new styles of viewing the old. In the case of the attempt to establish an Australian Playhouse, the notion of excellence, its legitimating purpose for the work of the flagship companies and the distinction provided by subscription to the flagship complicates the conditions of change. The shift recorded here during this period was irreversible but as we can see from the appropriation of Nimrod style in the Sydney Theatre Company, the ruling ideas had changed and the hegemonic companies had incorporated them.

In the movement to photography the aura of the Mona Lisa, in Benjamin's example, is atomised and diffused through multiple copying. Yet, the observation inherent, for the spectator, in the viewing of photography, even more so of film, and the multiplicity of access for both media ensures that the knowledge of artistic content, and, to an extent, of artistic method, is characterised, in part, by broad ownership.

Broad ownership signifies a vast alteration in patronage and, thereby, a fundamental change in the political orientation of, as Benjamin sees it, or, in the terms of this work, the legitimating ideologies underlying, both artistic style and production. Perception has undergone an education. Moreover, the paradigm of content has irrevocably altered, bringing about a changed suite of stylistic transactions between the producers of art and its consumers.

When an education of perception is effected, then, a successful social transaction within the field has occurred as a precondition for it. Benjamin's observation is that change arising from mechanical reproduction is irreversible since it creates a corresponding change in the nature of the productive and receptive space in which people operate. Culture cannot reverse itself after such a transformation. Similarly, the transformation effected by a Nimrod/APG style change is also irreversible because it is symptomatic and expressive of a larger underlying social movement, the new wave to which Meyrick and Wolf refer. The transformation has in fact been part of the redressive action of a social drama.

Each of these circumstances provides a change of outlook that is fundamental and general. What the liminoid organisations that carry the change do is provide the legitimating style that gives voice to thoughts and feelings lacking focus in the mundane environment of daily relations. However, as the thought space changes a destabilisation of settled

positions happens or threatens resulting in movement to protect established positions and thus the incorporation of style alluded to earlier.

In such circumstances, liminoid processes (i.e. productive processes occurring within liminoid spaces such as film and theatre) that play a role in manufacturing the symbols and styles that legitimate not only organizations but whole social movements are again split and the tensions of liminoid process and positional pressure again assert themselves. The elaboration of these styles as affected by these tensions and the legitimating feedback loop reflect the processes of both identification and demarcation of style occurring amongst individuals and groups.

A change attempted by promotion without the underlying power of technological or social change, is without the same certainty even when attempting an attachment to underlying ideas. Though the power of a legitimating style that arises from underlying social transformation may be felt at the time, it will be difficult to distinguish between that and what is merely advertising. The latter attempts to appropriate legitimating styles and seeks only to reinforce position in the hierarchy of ideas. It will be only at a later time, when the legendary status of people, groups and organisations within social movements has been established that the distinctions will become clear. This will be so even when the atmosphere of a period may provide an impression of transformational certainty. In such circumstances of change brought about by an education of perception, demarcation will be marked by a corresponding change in manufactured styles.

A state theatre company reflects a badge of distinction for an elite in any capital city in Australia. Satisfying the stylistic notions of this badging is an essential guessing and persuasion game for each of these companies. For other companies ranged around the flagship, the guessing and persuasion game during the last approximately half a century has been more critical. A new company may have a very clear idea of goals and desires. However, they must demarcate themselves through the style they adopt to attract patronage and so grasp position.

In contact with patronage, the legitimacy of their artefact and thereby organisation is tested by the legitimating feedback loop leading to survival or extinction. If it has survived extinction, then it has achieved a stylistic formula carrying the legitimacy that it can then elaborate and exploit. The degree of legitimacy stems from relative centrality in the field. That is legitimacy is a function of placement in the space, the position vis-à-vis domination of available resources as opposed to comparative marginalisation.

In contact with patronage, if the artefact represents a transformation of the style then an education of perception may have begun. A factor in that education will have been the patronage itself and the legitimating feedback loop it provides. Stylistic success and so the success of the company reflects satisfaction for the patronage. What the company voiced embodied the patronal desire.

That is, the style and its manipulation of content by the participants in this liminoid procedure and the willing assimilation of the new outlook or way of seeing by patronage, have altered the conventional outlook of the patronage. As the style is bound into an expression of ideology, so the assimilation is ideological at base. Nonetheless, the process has purged the preceding style, which cannot be revived with its former contextual and ideological value. It may return in other forms such as reactive tradition, as nostalgic sentiment, as restyled (retro) nostalgia or even as an attempt to recapture a sensation of the past.

To return to the examples of the Nimrod and the APG, the style of the Nimrod sat closer to the realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation than did that of the APG. Therefore, newness in the Nimrod could be more readily and broadly assimilated than newness at the APG. Legitimation rested not only on the clout of talented, profiled and well-connected individuals but also on those individuals adopting a style that, in its subliminal message, allowed for a liberal range of viewpoints and relatively 'comfortable' approaches to life in contrast to the ascetic-seeming, collectivist viewpoints of the APG. The style of the works captured the consciousness of ideas that now occupied necessary self, group and as it happened far-reaching new claims for national, definition.

Each of these companies established their ideas space within the cities in which they grew. In the end, the Nimrod came closer to hegemonising its respective space. Its legacy as a legend ultimately affected the style and legitimating ideas of the hegemonic company, the Sydney Theatre Company.

By the nineties in Adelaide, Doppio Teatro, Junction, Vitalstatistix and the Red Shed represented the ideologies released in the late sixties and that crystallised theatrically in the Australian Performing Group. The STCSA adapted to accommodate these changes. However, the presence of a funding approach that supported the former companies meant that there was less pressure to depart from the underlying legitimacy betokened by the idea of excellence and what that idea conveyed about programming and style. The pressure as we have seen came from different directions (the AFCT and commercial ventures). The Australian Playhouse was an attempt to use the change of style represented by the idea of Australian

theatre to reposition the company in response to these pressures. However, the education of perception springing from the work of the late sixties and seventies that might have aided such a venture had already occurred. The flagship company had successfully effected a series of incorporations of heterodoxy from the stylistic changes of the last generation. Therefore, the effort made to shift again the already remade ideational space was mistaken for the task of legitimating The Australian Playhouse. It did not amount in the end to more than advertising for a product that could not satisfy both the now relatively settled position of the patronage and the ritual requirements of the social moment.

Conclusion.

This thesis has argued a transformational process theory rather than a structural theory. That is, sociological nature is to be found in flux and not in static structure and the trends of change arise from interactions at all levels of social activity (and of these levels with environmental phenomena).

Levels of social activity begin at the internal response to the social in individuals including attachment, connection and conferred identity. Then the interaction of individuals with other individuals is mediated by groups, and overarching, meta-identities. These are social contexts apparent for them in their life environments.

Interactions are influenced by meanings contained in stylistic demeanour and interpretation. In turn, those meanings derive from ideologies that superimpose and justify claims on position in the life environment. These positions are available as, and defined by, ideas that exist in a space of possible ideas.

The configuration of all our activities, our adoptions and executions of personal and group styles and so on are aimed at connection or disconnection with or from others and with or from groups. The struggle is to position the personal in relation to the social through the adoption and testing of styles and meanings. Thus, are our actions are flows of symbols perceived as style, upon which our emergence or that of the groups to which we connect, and our and their subsequent legitimacy, depend.

As outlined referring to the work of Jurgen Habermas, legitimation concerns the validation of an utterance or act of expression, the 'speech act' (see in Chapter Seven), according to social norms. At the level of a meta-identity such as government, validation operates at a broad or gross level of agreement to be governed. At smaller group and field levels, the areas of contestation become smaller, the proximity of relative powers closer and available niches more greatly contested so that validation is more finely and jealously attuned.

Always the style demarcates and sustains ideological meaning that in turn justifies the occupation of space. The ideology has to contain an arrangement of sufficiently coherent-seeming ideas that stand the legitimacy tests that groups apply to their members or that patronage through the legitimating feedback loop applies to, for example, theatre companies as reflective of their own positional desires.

Out of our activities, events will arise frequently where occupation of space, argued and fought out over legitimacy will occur. Such events may

not be at the scale of social drama yet such a drama may emerge. Social dramas are the inevitable result of position contestation and legitimation.

Against the rigidifying landscape of ideology and because the liminoid is marginal and allows for ritual processes aimed at recovering or reforming disrupted norms, it (the liminoid) is permissive of a wider range of expressions. However, norms can be contradictory; one person's interpretation of a core value is not another's and the interpretive gap allows schism to grow. As a result, within this relatively permissive space, ritual is capable of skewing the normative. Here, suppressed beliefs and feelings are afforded the opportunity to surface with the potential to disrupt a current social accommodation that masks schismatic tensions.

It is to be remembered that our belongings, around which we form our selfhood, are multiple not single. Moreover, each belonging is not congruent with another; family ties, for example, do not bind by the same laws as those of the workplace. Congruence of ideology and positional claim will not be found within a group or an organisation. Positional activity tends therefore towards social dissonance and friction. All societies need mechanisms to deal with the eruptions that result from this incongruence. Redressive functions are essential. These are the rituals of harmony or healing or the social drama working its way through the cycle to the moment of redress. In this way, the ideas of legitimation and the liminoid, the ritual of my title, interact.

My case studies centred on the history of the APG and the Nimrod in terms of the social drama. We saw two audacious ventures overturning an established aesthetic. In so doing, they enlarged niches in the space of possible ideas for expression. Assimilating the results of a positive legitimating feedback loop from their patronage, their work successively furthered the legitimacy of their position to the extent that the dominating ideas of the field in the space of possible ideas were threatened and then replaced.

To have this success, the APG and the Nimrod produced work that continued to enhance their position at the expense of the dominant ideas and in contributing to the space of possible ideas enabled the establishment of new activity. The legitimacy gained by their activity extended through funding policy and a changing aesthetic to the work of other companies in other parts of the country including the work of Adelaide companies such as Troupe and The Stage Company. Leading figures like John Romeril from the APG and Nick Enright whose work was important at the Nimrod, are examples of those who significantly lent their legitimating weight to work in Adelaide.

Reviewing the significance of processes, outlined in this thesis, within liminoid spaces of which theatre is one, two operations become apparent. Firstly, these processes produce the styles sustaining the legitimacy of the liminoid activity of the group, company and meta-identity. They are able to do this since they occupy an ideational niche that is situated deliberately at the margin of the normative.

Secondly, for the patronage who seek benefit and enjoyment from activities like theatre, liminally produced style constitutes validation of, and reflection upon, their social identity.

In certain circumstances, these validating and reflective constituents of liminoid processes can operate as aspects of the redressive mechanisms of a social drama by providing the symbols, styles and models of action that apply to renewed social terms of engagement. In other circumstances, they can provide an opportunity for the social management of difficulties arising from positional discord. The two identity fables of this thesis are examples of this.

The first case is the operation of the lights as I have described. In this case, the operations clearly contributed to a broad education of perception across the field laying the groundwork of legitimacy for the work case studied in Adelaide in the first half of the nineties. In other cases, such as the period during which the STCSA became The Australian Playhouse, the branding chosen and the styles and symbols that flowed from the choice, did not perform these constituent tasks.

A Series of Interlocking Mechanisms

I have attempted to describe a series of interlocking mechanisms beginning with the idea that selfhood is formed in response to surrounding positions. Selfhood has two co-existing components: that conferred by attachments and belongings, which I have called conferred identity, and that experienced as a life trajectory compounding the conferring of successive and enduring belongings. For both, the individual as agent and the individual as member, the definition of oneself through the attainment and maintenance of position is fundamental.

Intimately connected with this is its obverse, the fear of losing belonging and becoming alienated. For Jo it is movin' on to the berryin' ground and for Chelsea it is casting herself off the local bridge under which the party from which she is excluded is raving. Alienation, we have seen, provides the driving purpose of romance and romance is the dramatic ritual of integration whatever the context, whatever the sophistication.

I contend that the positioning motivation is the fundamental drive determining both selfhood formation and conferred identity and, beyond them, group forces. In this light, ideology is a function of group cohesion or group alliances and one of the mechanisms groups employ to establish their legitimacy and so maintain occupation of their ideational space.

As the individual needs the group and acts to secure position, groups in turn act to secure position. In this way, group actions are analogous to individual actions. The group must maintain itself and its position. The cost is the alienation of its individuals, the profit is the successful conferring of identity and the opportunity to use the space so gained to express one's individuality and to participate in the various businesses of life.

For the group to maintain itself, it must successfully claim this expressive space. A successful claim asserts, and establishes, legitimate hold over the space and acts to maintain and extend its economic hold. Legitimacy claims are reified as ideology.

However, expressive space is limited as a space of possible ideas. The space of possible ideas is formed by three broad areas of ideas. The first two are the knowledge of the past, the realm of tradition and nostalgia, and a conception of the future or *'the way things should be'* manifested as risky forms of thought enacted in the present, the realm of derring-do. These are in contrast to a dominant expressive stylistic range represented by the hegemonic group, the realm of maximum capital and comfortable expectation. It is from this space of possible ideas that ideological positions find their niches and contest for economic hold over expressive space.

Ideology brings with it symbolic representations that coalesce into style. The style demarcates the position and is the instrument charged to sustain the ideology. Let's note here the pressures on congruence between action and statement that have already arisen in these natural mechanisms. The original positional claim was justified by ideology and the ideology itself is chosen from an ideational space. The ideology is then iterated continually through style.

Thus, the positional motivation is disguised by ideology and becomes deeply embedded in action. The 'wellsprings' of action are therefore 'unacknowledged'. Where they become fundamental parts of operation, they arise in other forms such as commonsense.

Tensions exist constantly while groups seek to stabilise and improve position. Relative stability can be understood as constellations of like expressive groups such as theatre companies, playground groups, furniture shops or sporting teams. The competition for position amongst

them is mediated by, and the expression of each is supported by, a meta-identification forming a basis of patronage imparting expressive space and economic power. Within the constellation, groups will seek to demarcate themselves to justify their particular ownership of position. Position constantly shifts and as it does, so do positional definitions and justifications.

Ritual observances act to provide symbolic ideological support, their validatory role, and to resolve tensions. Both of these are liminoid actions of theatre. Balancing these is one of the legitimacy tasks of a theatre company. Though there will be little awareness of what is occurring as one is entertained by David Williamson, this delicate balancing of our claims against our need to adapt as the defining elements of our life environment change, is the substance of the ritual experience. The experience is integrally involved in the continual working out of positional tension.

Against these actions are the processes of Turner's social drama: large, often traumatic and change-laden processes that occur when the ritual balancing processes do not work. An example of these is the change in the ideological landscape of Australian theatre during the period of the late sixties and seventies described in this thesis. Within this particular social drama, I described the story of major change in the ideational space beginning with a seminal event and the creation of new legends providing new symbols that coalesce into new stylistic demarcations.

In using theatrical examples for the case study of this thesis (as opposed to a sporting club where the argument could have been as vigorously pursued) and in partly couching the study as a sociology of theatre, I have described how theatre is especially revelatory of a paradox for all human action. I described it earlier as the 'selfless' of contribution as against the 'selfish' of expression.

For Turner, art is a part of the reflexive functions of society that redress destructive pressures. Art is quintessentially reflexive and is the human bending back on him/herself to consider what is happening or how it happened. Paradoxically, Bourdieu's notion that art is part of the badging of distinction appears to strip art of this idealisation. However, both must be right if art is to operate. Art must reflect and comment while entertaining and engaging and each of these functions must be done in such a way as to appeal to the stylistic contingencies of the groupings that are or maybe its patronage.

Artists will obey the laws of group activity but will do so with a simultaneous consciousness of their liminoid and reflexive position and role. To talk of their group actions is also to talk of their stance towards

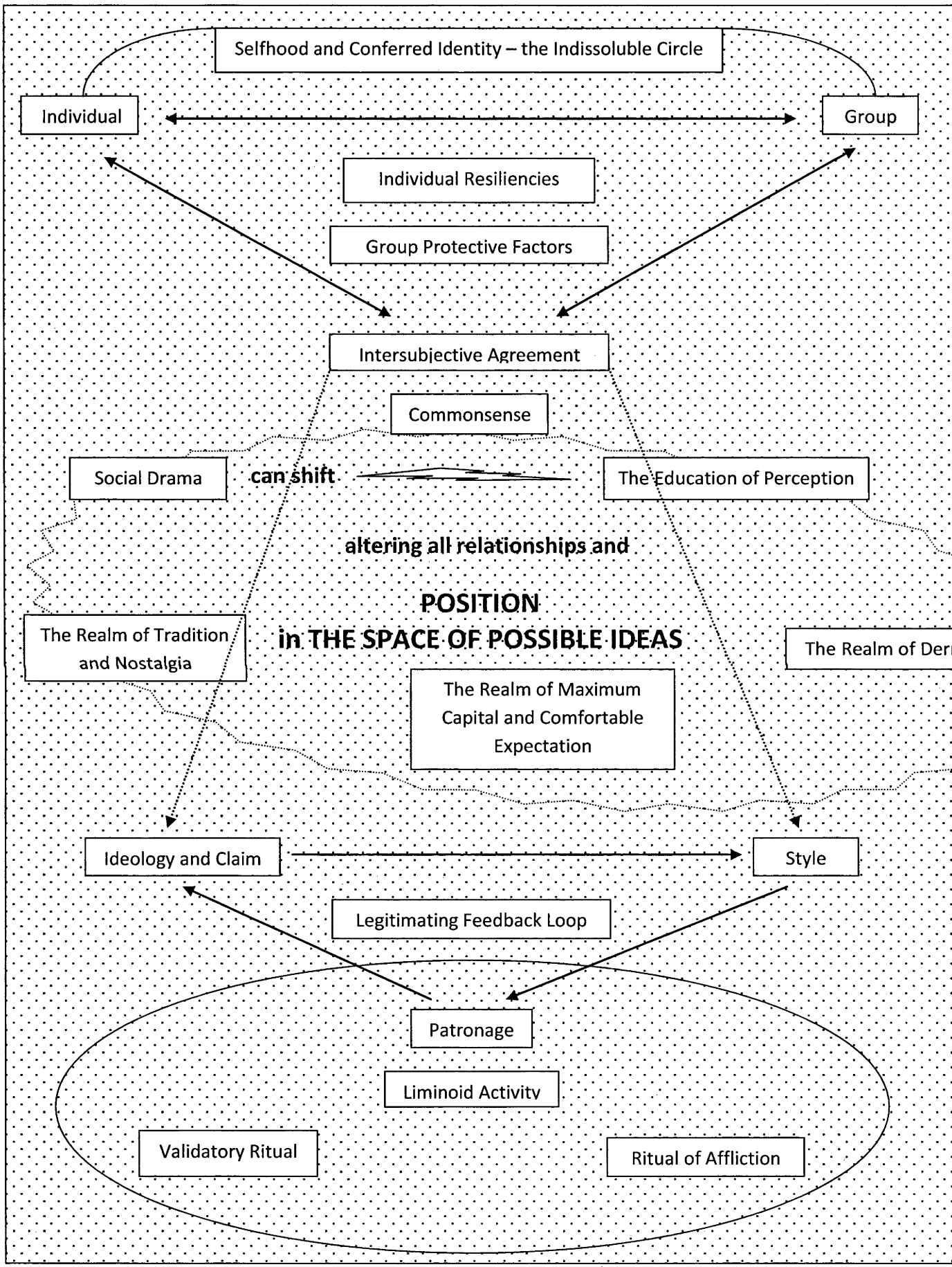
the reflexive role they carry within the broader society. This paradoxical unconscious group behaviour coupled with conscious reflective behaviour is a constant in this discussion. It underlines the connection between the mechanics of demarcating style and group positioning within a space of possible ideas and the functions of ritual and redressive action. In fact, these operate as integrated sets of mechanisms, the one, style adoption and position, demanding unacknowledgement in operation for effect, while the other, ritual and redressive action, attempts to balance the regressive effect of unacknowledged actions.

In the artist this combination of unacknowledgement and acknowledgement is perhaps more obvious than in others. Nevertheless, it is in all of us. Moreover, artists become metaphors for all of us who occupy at various points liminal aspects of our social space. There we are required by the modality of the moment to be self-reflexive and to do the hard work of realising what is happening around us.

A related paradox is the idea of the education of perception. Is this an education or a subliminal learning? In fact, it is the latter. Realisation of our learning is by hindsight since the educator of the metaphor, in Benjamin's reasoning, is mechanical reproduction and in this study, it is widened to include any substantial change to which humans in society must adapt. The educator is the necessity to adapt. However, there is no necessity to adapt unless, as it were, the position description changes.

What produces the need to adapt can be human forces such as mechanical reproduction. However, these in turn have been brought about by changes in the space of possible ideas. These changes have produced group operations productive of ideologies and activities that have resulted in cameras, printing and climate change. Dealing with this is a reflexive and often redressive activity requiring liminal operations. The following diagram expresses these affinities.

Figure 9. Interlocking Mechanisms Arising from the Positional Motivation



Implications

Claims about objectives and motivating beliefs and the significance of these claims within the fields of action in which they are situated, are part of a mechanism of social belonging and placement, i.e. position, rather than what they are professed to be, namely, statements about purpose purported to be rationally congruent with practice.[283]

The observations of this thesis demonstrate the operation of the mechanisms I have outlined above. Further, they show, as the hypothesis (repeated above) of this thesis suggests, that human interaction has difficulty with 'plain speaking'. This is by necessity since our positional motivation causes us to justify our position with claims that to varying degrees disguise our allying or excluding actions with regard our group memberships. I noted above the pressures on congruence between action and statement that arise from the working of these natural mechanisms. Iterations of stylistic adaptation further distance us from our beginnings in positional claims, while layers of action embed their claims in unacknowledgment.

Research on the direction and strength of the application of group norms either has or would reveal these effects. Such research would establish the supposed norms of group activity and the style that carries these. For example, under what circumstances the norms and styles are freely transmitted, or whether they are withheld while used as an exclusionary device, would then provide insight into what or whom the group considers ally or competitor, emblematic member or debasing presence. The pattern of actions, contrasted with the ethics of behaviour overtly stated, would begin to provide a key to the variance between claim and action.

This sort of research can establish the way in which elements such as *variance between claim and action* in the above example operate at differing hierarchies of group and institutional action. Such research can establish, or has already established, laws that affect this variance. In stating that laws may already be established, I am suggesting that the focus on position may produce new understandings of existing research.

This study has attempted to demonstrate the fundamental nature of the positional motivation by showing how a positional focus in sociology leads to an understanding of the interaction of known mechanisms such as ritual, identity conferring, ideological claim and testing of legitimacy.

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283 Hypothesis, see on page 11.

Therefore, recognition of interlocking mechanisms would dictate that studies of separate aspects would need to indicate the flow-on effect into other aspects of the interlocked mechanisms. Thus, a study of the nature of a group centre might need to include the nature of its constraining action on the rim, how it exerts power and how the exertion of power relates to the styles available. This sort of study has obvious interconnections with the study of norms, styles and transmission or withholding suggested above.

An implication for discourse theory flows from this thesis and recognition of interlocking mechanisms. As noted, I have resumed using the term 'ideology' in its sense as a 'claim of right'. An accepted claim denotes legitimacy of position and this is sustained by style; style being the outward expression of the ideology. Discourse is a form of style being a formation of concepts wrought into an interactive language, determined by the hegemonic ideology and practised as linguistic and institutional codes and patterns of rule. It is a denotation of hegemony within the space of possible ideas. As such, it belongs to the unacknowledged power of the intersubjective agreement. The primary example of this in this thesis is what discursive theory in observing hegemony within the field of theatre, might call the 'discourse of excellence'. For all the change that occurred in the space of possible ideas during the late sixties and seventies, the discourse of excellence persisted in determining where the centre and the ruling ideas lay.

Discourse theory seems to take the hegemony as a kind of structural given. As I have stated this thesis is more concerned with society as process and transformation and so has more sympathy with theories of emergence. In this regard, study as to what approaches commonsense and what does not quite get there is of interest. For example, clearly Chris Westwood attempted to justify the Australian Playhouse as commonsensical given the new order of ideas. Yet, in fact, it was nowhere near. An implication for study here is about what might be near? The differences in style and so ideology between the APG and the Nimrod are very instructive here. How the Nimrod adoption of style more nearly adapted to other fields, and the change centres associated with them, than did the APG would be a revealing study. Similarly, how these contiguous fields deployed their support of the Nimrod within their own field would be an instructive complementary study.

Such a study would occur within the sociology of theatre. However, it would not just tell us about theatre. Of far greater importance would be what it would tell us about the operation of groups and their deployment of style. Based on this thesis, such a study would be telling us about the process of sustaining legitimacy – the awareness of the testing processes

related to this – and the influences producing the hegemonic judgements of style and determinations of ideas that shape the space of possible ideas. The study of the Nimrod actions as opposed to the APG actions and, then again, the Nimrod actions as opposed to the ultimately replacing Sydney Theatre Company will tell much about both the mistake in retrospect of the Australian Playhouse in its own geo-polity and about the outcome of a major determining transformation in Australian social history.

However, it would be of small use for sociology not to aim to draw from such an analytic history a multi-factorial picture of the influences that affect the space of possible ideas at a particular time. What this study has offered is a number of intersections of view that can be adumbrated to a larger picture. For example, style is key so that studying the deployment of style will be important. However, studies aim to reduce variables and studying the deployment of style in this way would be, and studies of style have been, examples of such reduction.

Rather, and considering as we have seen that style sustains legitimacy, a study of the deployment of style would also need to build in an awareness that style therefore interlocks with other mechanisms of positioning and position maintenance. Thus, after determining the overlapping fields of style to be scrutinised including thought style, demeanour, dress, design and so on for any given constellation of groups, questions that could be asked in building a research model might include:

What were the central orthodoxies of the thought style?

How were the peripheries of the thought style delimited?

How was the thought style deployed?

How was the deployed style reflected or echoed in the patronage?

Note at this stage that these questions relate thought to style. Further questions can then relate style to ritual and legitimacy:

What are the validatory and redressive forms of ritual practised by, or available to, this constellation of groups and the individuals within them?

How do these rituals adjust to the style required?

What do the rituals disturb or reflect?

At this point, *inter alia*, legitimacy tests are invoked. Legitimacy tests invoke the maintenance of ideology and its legitimating feedback loop fit with patronage. Part of the testing is of the liminoid power of the rituals in relation to the group purposes.

How does the ritual offered reflect the ideological claim a group makes on its position?

Is the niche sufficiently defined in the space of possible ideas for the claim to survive legitimacy testing such as to maintain economic hold on the expressive space?

Alternatively, is the economic hold growing and so indicating an education of perception and a change in the ideational shape of the space of possible ideas?

Each of these questions presupposes a way into sociological analysis that suggests the others. From the outset, an analytic model would need to have this breadth of awareness in view. The questions are based in this example, on a deeper analysis of socio-historical events described in this thesis. Notwithstanding the liminoid nature of the field dealt with here, a similar chain of questions could be asked of any field or meta-identity, institution or group. The relevance is the interlocking nature of sociological mechanisms. What makes their interlocking theoretically possible in this model is the fundamental nature of the motivation for position and its replication at every level of human activity.

Appendix 1 - The Story of Larry and Ben

- Scenario developed by Andrew Lovering and David Temme.

RECESS

All the students are rushing out to the oval. Ben, Larry and Richard walk together, Larry is stopped by the Ag teacher. Ben and Richard walk on. The Ag teacher asks Larry to do a speech about the agriculture farm the school runs. Larry agrees to do the speech.

Friends (Ben and Richard) are talking on the oval. Larry walks over to the group and the mood changes.

They start talking about what they want to do on the last day. Then they organize the bundy [truanting] and where they will go. Ben starts boasting about how fine a girl named Karina is. Friends pick up on the vibe that Ben likes her.

DURING CLASS TIME

Two girls (Karina and Liana) are in the bathrooms talking. Karina reveals that she likes Larry. Liana starts playfully teasing her about it and saying she'll tell Larry and all the other girls.

LUNCHTIME

Guys sitting on oval talking about random stuff. Karina and Liana walk over and take Larry away. Both girls confront him about going out with Karina. Larry stutters for a moment then agrees. When he goes back over to the group Ben asks him what they wanted and Larry makes something up.

END OF SCHOOL (next day)

The Ag teacher confronts Larry about the speech: "Hi Larry, how's the speech?" Larry raises his voice in annoyance and says: "You haven't even given me a chance to practise it yet." The Ag teacher tries to calm Larry down and tells him he was just curious and not hassling him about it.

LARRY'S HOME

Larry is sitting at home at night typing up and practising his speech. "Good morning teachers and students of (insert name here) high school, welcome to today's assembly..."

START OF SCHOOL

Larry, Ben and Richard are walking across the oval away from the school (hence the bundy). Larry starts going slower and the others get further

ahead of him. Ben notices Larry falling behind and questions him. Larry says that he doesn't want to do it and he's going back to give the speech.

ASSEMBLY

Speech: "Good Morning teachers and students of (Insert Name Here) high school. I'm here to talk to you about the agriculture farm. A week ago the government kindly donated $20,000 to the agriculture farm. I'm here today to recruit anyone who is interested in helping out in the farm. If anyone is interested in joining and helping out with the animals then head to the drama suite at the first half of lunch. Ladies and Gentlemen thank you for listening."

RECESS

The whole group are waiting outside at recess for Larry. Ben and Richard walk up to Larry and start casually chatting, but Richard moves around and crouches behind Larry, Ben proceeds to push Larry over. Then they start to beat Larry up.

Appendix 2 – Conditions for a Functional Analysis of Social Group Cohesion.

Mary Douglas's citation of Jon Elster's intentionalist understanding of social group cohesion. The following are "conditions that a correctly argued functional analysis must meet"[284]:

> *An institutional or behavioural pattern, X, is explained by its function, Y, for a group, Z, if and only if:*
>
> *1. Y is an effect of X;*
> *2. Y is beneficial for Z;*
> *3. Y is unintended by actions producing X;*
> *4. Y or the causal relation between X and Y is unrecognized by actors in Z; and*
> *5. Y maintains X by a causal feedback loop passing through Z.* [285]

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284 Op. cit., Douglas, *How Institutions Think*. p 33.

285 Ibid., p 33.

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List of Interviews

The interviews are categorised in the following order:

Place and Period

Company

Date of Interview: earliest to latest.

Each of these interviews were conducted and recorded by Garry Fry. Dates indicate date of interview.

Adelaide, during the period pre 1990.

The Stage Company

Brian Debnam, Co-Artistic Director. 21/10/1995.

Rob George, writer. 28/5/1996

Troupe Theatre Company

Sid Brisbane, collective member and actor. 15/9/1992. – also Red Shed.

Peter Dunn, collective member and actor. 27/5/1996.

Adelaide, during the period 1990 – 1995.

State Theatre Company of South Australia

Simon Phillips, Artistic Director. 30/10/1992.

Robert Love, General Manager. 15/10/1992.

Cherie LeCornu, Promotional Manager. 11/10/1992.

Chris Westwood, Executive Producer. 16/8/1995

Chris Westwood, Executive Producer. 31/10/1995

Chris Westwood, Executive Producer. 28/5/1996 (This and subsequent STCSA interviews refer to the period and into events of 1996.)

Jill Berry, Promotional Manager. 28/5/1996

Junction Theatre Company

Geoff Crowhurst, Artistic Director. 20/3/1992.

Geoff Crowhurst, Artistic Director. 27/5/1996.

Red Shed Theatre Company

David Carlin collective member, director and writer. 18/3/1992

Tim Maddock, Ulli Birve and others, collective members; Tim: designer, Ulli: actor. 28/5/1996.

Vitastatistix Theatre Company

Margie Fischer, Co-Artistic Director. 2/11/1992.

Doppio Teatro

Theresa Crea, Co-Artistic Director. 15/9/1995.

Other Theatre Practitioners and Arts Bureaucrats

Ken Lloyd, SA Department of the Arts. 29/10/1992.

Jula Szuster and Alex Burford, SA Department of the Arts. 18/8/1995.

Jula Szuster, SA Department of the Arts. 9/11/1995.

Robert Cousins, actor.

Rob Brookman, Executive Producer, Adelaide Festival Centre Trust. 30/5/1996.

Melbourne, during the Australian Performing Group period.

Australian Performing Group

Geoff Milne, collective member, theatre technician and academic. 9/7/1992.

John Timlin, collective member, administrator and agency manager. 24/7/1992.

Jack Hibberd, collective member, writer. 17/8/1992.

Evelyn Krape, collective member, actor. 24/8/1992.

David Kendal, actor. 30/5/1996.

La Mama

Liz Jones, Artistic Director. 9/7/1992.

Other Theatre Practitioners and Arts Bureaucrats

Malcolm Robertson, director, dramaturge and actor. 10/7/1992.

Frank Bren, writer and actor. 10/7/1992.

Sydney, during the Nimrod period.

Nimrod Theatre Company

Ken and Lillian Horler, Co-Artistic Director and General Manager respectively. 15/6/1992.

Richard Wherrett, Co-Artistic Director. 24/7/1992.

John Bell, Co-Artistic Director. 5/8/1992.

Tony Llewellyn-Jones, actor. 18/8/1992.

Sydney, during the late Nimrod and immediate post-Nimrod period.

Griffin Theatre Company

Ian Watson, Artistic Director. 27/7/1987.

Ian Watson, Artistic Director. 1/9/1987. (2 tapes)

Noel Hodda, writer and actor. 6/11/1987.

John Stone, writer and actor. 6/11/1987.

Belvoir Street Theatre – Company B

Chris Westwood, General Manager. 18/11/1988

Q Theatre Company

Doreen Warburton, Artistic Director. 22/9/1988

Other Theatre Practitioners

Kingston Anderson, director. 27/5/1988.

Don Mamouney, director. (undated)

Errol Bray, writer and director. 26/7/1988. (2 tapes)

Rex Cramphorne, director. 6/5/1988. (2 tapes)

Louis Nowra, writer. 11/1/1989.

Aubrey Mellor, director. 31/3/1989.

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